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ABSTRACT

Nine chapters emphasizing religious, domestic, and economic aspects of women in Southeast Asia are presented. In an introductory chapter, Penny Van Esterik discusses women and Buddhism, societal and domestic roles, occupational patterns, research on women in Southeast Asia, and Southeast Asia's past and future. In chapter 2, "Buddhism, Sex-Roles, and the Thai Economy," Thomas Kirsch examines the role and features of Thai Buddhism, sex roles in the Thai family, aspects of and recent developments in the Thai economy, division of labor by sex, and developments in modern Thai Buddhism. The next two chapters, "Women Meditation Teachers in Thailand" (John Van Esterik), and "Laywomen in Theravada Buddhism" (Penny Van Esterik), are followed by a chapter entitled "Putting Malay Women in Their Place," in which Carol C. Laderman examines women's occupations, women and local politics, marriage and divorce, theories of conception and gestation, and dangers of childbirth. Subsequent chapters include "Women in Java's Rural Middle Class: Progress or Regress" (Valerie L. Hull), "Women and Men in Iloilo, Philippines: 1903-1970" (M. Christina Blanc Szanton), and "Sex Roles in the Philippines: The Ambiguous Cebuana" (Clark D. Neher). The final chapter, "Sexual Status in Southeast Asia: Comparative Perspectives on Women, Agriculture, and Political Organization" (Robert L. Winzeler), is followed by an appendix that includes a list of research questions, a bibliography of over 300 related resources, and an index. Over 20 tables and figures are included in the text. (LH)

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Center for Southeast Asian Studies

Monograph Series on Southeast Asia

Women of Southeast Asia

Penny Van Esterik, editor

Occasional Paper No. 9, 1982

Penny Van Esterik, editor

Women of Southeast Asia

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Penny Van Esterik

Southeast Asia has long been identified as an area where women enjoy high status. From Burma to the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines this alleged high status is accentuated by the contrasting male dominance characteristic of traditional Indian and Chinese societies. In this decade of significant advances in women's studies it is understandable that an area such as Southeast Asia should be of particular interest to scholars thrashing out the complexities of sex roles cross-culturally. But when we look to Southeast Asia for documentation on women, what do we find? A delightfully refreshing cliché about the high status of women in this part of the world and very little else.

There has been very little basic research on Southeast Asian women and much of the research that has been done is scattered in less accessible publications, or in Southeast Asian languages. As a result, those of us working in this area can easily fall into the habit of citing secondary sources such as Burling (1965) or perhaps looking to earlier observers such as La Loubère (1969) or Chou Ta-Kuan (1967) to document the high status of women in Southeast Asia without further examination or analysis.

This collection of papers focuses attention on some of the gaps in our knowledge of Southeast Asian women.

We certainly cannot claim that this work fills these gaps, but we hope that it will point out some productive directions for future research. Our first aim, then, is to stimulate problem-oriented research in this area in order to expand or qualify generalizations about Southeast Asia as an area where women enjoy enviable power and status.

If Southeast Asia is indeed an area where women have substantial influence, then it is particularly important to look in depth at particular cultural contexts in order to explain this condition. If this generalization is not valid, then it must be corrected or revised before it becomes an unquestioned assumption about Southeast Asia. These papers should be of particular interest to Southeast Asian specialists who want to know more about women, and to scholars in women's studies who need to know more about Southeast Asia. The book also begins to fill the gap on the literature available on Asian women. This is a necessary complement to studies available on women in Japan (cf. Lebra, Paulson, and Powers 1976) and China (cf. Wolf and Wilke 1975; Young 1973).

The papers in this volume emphasize religious, domestic and economic aspects of women's lives. These dimensions are arbitrarily distinguished, since women simultaneously participate in ideological, subsistence, and social systems. Nevertheless, the distinctions remind us that there is little to be gained from examining women's roles in economic production, without also considering their ideological definition according to the dominant religious tradition, or their place in the household. A broad understanding of the status of Southeast Asian women must recognize the mutual influence of ideological and institutional factors. Of greatest use would be an approach which would specify how the ideological evaluation of women relates to their actual behavior in family and occupational contexts. Unfortunately, the task of integration and explanation is still incomplete, although several authors here have begun the task. The need for analyzing women's status from different points of view is particularly obvious when we consider the contemporary efforts of many Southeast Asian countries to

improve conditions for women. Ortner argues:

> Efforts directed at changing the social institutions--through setting quotas on hiring, for example, or through passing equal-pay-for-equal-work laws--cannot have far-reaching effects if cultural language and imagery continue to purvey a relatively devalued view of women. But at the same time efforts directed solely at changing cultural assumptions--through male and female consciousness-raising groups, for example, or through revision of educational materials and mass-media imagery--cannot be successful unless the institutional base of the society is changed to support and reinforce the changed cultural view (1974:87).

The papers are based on fieldwork in Southeast Asia and the dominant disciplinary bias is anthropological. However, the papers demonstrate clearly the need for multidisciplinary studies in order to place the complexity of women's roles in historical and cultural context.

Women and Buddhism

Symbolic and ideological definitions of women are not sufficient to explain women's status, but they should be included in any discussion of Southeast Asian women. The first three papers look at how women are defined by Theravada Buddhism, one of the great religious traditions of Southeast Asia. Although these papers emphasize Thai Buddhist women, the implications may be broadly applied to Buddhist Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, comparable fieldwork in Burma, Laos, and Cambodia is difficult or impossible at present.

There is a substantial literature linking Buddhist doctrine and social behavior in Theravada Buddhist communities, much of it done by anthropologists (cf. Tambiah 1970; Spiro 1970; Terweil 1975; Bunnak 1973). Buddhism defines women as being . . . "inherently lower in religious

status than men, and women are barred by sex from aspiring to the roles to which the greatest virtue attaches, namely the roles associated with the Buddhist *sangha*" (Keyes 1977:161). Ideologically, then, women are inferior to men. On the other hand, Keyes also points out that:

> The fact that in all Theravada Buddhist societies, nonascriptive criteria are at least as important as ascriptive criteria in the allocation of social roles can be explained, I believe, with reference to the Buddhist ideas that *karma* not only determines one's place along the hierarchy of relative suffering but also that human beings create their own *karma* (1977:164).

This hint of potential spiritual equality suggests that factors other than sex are important in determining an individual's spiritual worth. Buddhist doctrine appears to be sufficiently paradoxical to allow for alternative representation, a point emphasized in the following papers.

Buddhist ideology supplies us with certain images of women. By including research on this ideology, we are not equating these images and myths with real Buddhist women--past or present. Nevertheless, we recognize the importance of Buddhist ideology as a reference system which men and women may use to interpret their own behavior. How can women manipulate this ideology to fit their changing values and lifestyles? Or, how are women constrained by Buddhist ideology?

Thomas Kirsch proposes an integration of ideological and economic variables for Thai society, which might also have implications for Buddhist Southeast Asia. He argues that Buddhism builds in certain orientations toward economic behavior which can also be linked to sex role patterning. He outlines the relevant Buddhist values and documents the economic orientation of Thai women, but cautions us not to view this simply as an instance of high status and equality without relating these economic facts to religious goals and values.

John Van Esterik elaborates on a new religious role for women in Theravada Buddhist countries, the meditation teachers of Bangkok. He shows how these scholars have appealed to modern elite Buddhists through their interpretation of the Buddhist canon. He, too, finds that these women do not view themselves simply as women, but as persons on their way to transcending distinctions such as male and female. He relates this complex of lay women meditation teachers to the system of political power in modern Thailand, noting in particular competing ideologies to traditional Buddhist thought, and suggests that women meditation teachers may be viewed as non-threatening to masculine political order.

My paper on laywomen in Theravada Buddhism introduces three rural Thai women, each of whom utilize Buddhist ideology for very different ends. Women, the most conspicuous merit makers in Buddhist Southeast Asia, are clearly lay devotees with no access to the most valued religious roles since the ordination tradition for women ended before Buddhism became established in Southeast Asia. But there is still substantial variation possible within the identity of lay devotees to Buddhism. I use this variation to demonstrate that women per se are not devalued, but rather non-ordination is devalued. Both men and women, then, value masculine asceticism over feminine sensuality.

These papers imply a dualism linking women with fertility, nurturance, and attachment, and men with supramundane power and detachment. Additional research on Islamic ideology, and tribal belief systems might reveal whether such dualism is a basic Southeast Asian pattern, predating both Islam and Theravada Buddhism.

Social and Domestic Roles

Women's social and domestic roles are not isolated from the religious institutions in Southeast Asia. Religious attitudes and law may affect women's rights within marriage, their reproductive freedom, and even the

domestic duties they perform. In her analysis, Barbara Ward argues that:

> It is always sociologically unsound to argue as if social facts were derived from religious beliefs and rituals and did not exist in their own right . . . we do not argue the other way (namely, that religious beliefs and rituals are simply a product of social structure) either. The relationship is one of subtle mutual influence, differing with different religious and social systems, and at different historical periods (1963:66).

Southeast Asian women have improved their domestic situation by influencing marriage law reforms. Indonesian women, for example, have objected to child marriage, forced marriage, polygamy, and arbitrary divorce exclusively from the husband's side. The national marriage law passed in 1973 allowed arbitrary divorce and polygamy cases to be regulated by religious rather than civil courts, thus widening the influence of the religious courts (Millone 1978:16). Under ancient Thai law:

> A women was at all times under someone's protection. If single, no matter how old, she was under the care and protection of her parents; when married, she was under her husband's protection. Parental power was converted into conjugal power and transferred to her husband (Wichiencharoen and Netisastra, cited in Engel 1978:168).

Under more recent laws, married women could not dispose of common marital property without their husband's permission. A 1935 Thai law forbade men to have more than one wife (Aneckvanich 1978:34). These conditions have been partially corrected by the passage of a new family law permitting Thai women to sue for divorce, share rights to family property, and sue for damages from the woman who has had sexual relations with her husband (Ounayakowit 1979:14). Hopefully, women will have the

power and leverage at the local level to enforce these laws protecting their marriage rights.

The papers by Laderman and Hull focus on the extent and meaning of women's domestic activities--running households, giving birth, raising children, producing and processing food. Although they refer to different communities, they illustrate how the actions of women serve to integrate families and households within wider community networks.

Carol Laderman demonstrates how women in a rural community on the east coast of Malaysia are kept in or restored to their place. A Malay woman's household duties must be combined with the less lucrative labor available to women in the community. Multiple marriages and easy divorces favor men and increase the economic insecurity for Malay women. The differences between men and women are further emphasized by the theories and practices surrounding pregnancy and delivery. Fear of supernatural and social sanctions, and internalization of the stereotype of proper behavior for a Malay woman combine effectively to keep women in their place.

Valerie Hull's study of women in Java's rural middle class is an important contribution to our understanding of class differences in Indonesia. In it, she compares the lifestyle of middle and lower-class women, their employment patterns, membership in organizations, and household management. Her research demonstrates how differences in class are important variables in understanding the status of women, even in the rural context where it is common to view women as forming a homogenous undifferentiated group. She identifies a key problem for upper-income, educated rural women--their lack of realistic goals or opportunities in the village. A similar problem was identified for Philippine women by Jacobson (1974:365).

Occupational Patterns

One consistent theme in the work of anthropologists,

economists and historians writing about Southeast Asia, has been the importance of women's economic contribution to household and nation. Both in the gardens of shifting cultivators and the wet-rice paddies of lowland agriculturalists, women's labor has been critically important. Chandra Jayawardena writes that among the Aceh of North Sumatra ". . . rice cultivation has not traditionally been regarded as the province of men," and that men admit that women know much more about it (1977:28). In Thailand, women not only provide farm labor, but also contribute to decision making in rural farming communities. Commonly women handle the financial affairs of their households and act as conservers of the family wealth, often reserving secret savings for the use of their children. Generally, we can observe women shepherding resources and maximizing the worth of the household to guarantee the material welfare of family and ultimately, community (cf. Hollnsteiner 1981).

Boserup identifies Southeast Asian women as actively involved in market trading and entrepreneurial activity: they make up half of the trading labor force in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, and Vietnam (1970:89). Cristina Szanton's research on subsistence marketing in a Philippine town demonstrates that vending is predominantly a woman's occupation, with women substantially outnumbering men in the marketplace (1972:73). Even in the urban sector, Boserup notes that the "range of employment opportunities open to urban women in the countries of Southeast Asia is unusually wide and both the traditional and modern sector have high levels of female employment" (1970:189).

Cristina Szanton's research on women and men in the Philippines reflects a concern with historical processes of change. She documents the differential access of males and females to social and occupational roles and to control over resources from 1903 to 1970 in Iloilo province, Philippines. Based on national censuses and ethnographic fieldwork, she explores occupational stratification in pre-Spanish Philippines, and subsequently under foreign rule, first Spanish and later American.

Neher examines the sex roles of the women of Cebu, a Bisayan island south of Manila and east of Iloilo where Szanton worked. He, too, questions the image of the dominant Filipino and points out the ambiguity and contradictions in the way both men and women view women. He suggests how education socialization through textbooks may provide a basis for these contradictory images. After examining the actual participation of women in economic and political activities, Neher concludes that the role of the Cebuana is clearly circumscribed. He suggests that Filipino policymakers must acknowledge the complexity of sex role images before invoking any social policies.

Finally, Robert Winzler reviews some of the explanations for relative sex role equality in Southeast Asia, including the relative availability of new land, bilateral inheritance, the nature of wet rice cultivation, and the absence of strong centralized governments. Using Southeast Asian evidence, he critiques three lines of analysis; the first, deriving women's status from their role in agricultural production; the second, from domestic and political order; and the third, relating status to demographic features such as female infanticide. Using the Human Relations Area Files to make comparisons within Southeast Asia, Winzeler integrates economic, political, and social evidence within the context of population ecology.

The papers are followed by a list of possible research questions that were raised during the preparation of this work. The bibliography at the end of the volume combines the references cited by all authors and additional references on Southeast Asian women.

Filling the Gaps

While it is not uncommon for women to be invisible or taken for granted in social science research, women are not invisible in research on Southeast Asia. Nelson suggests that women may be ignored in fields such as rural development because the researchers are usually

men, or they are women trained to accept male bias and fear being labelled feminists. In addition, women's work is often discounted in analyses of productive labor (Nelson 1979:11-12). E. Ardener has argued that ethnographers often have a bias favoring the kinds of models that men provide, perhaps because men provide a "bounded model of society" appealing to ethnographers (1977:2). This potential bias toward male models may be reduced in Southeast Asia where a substantial amount of field research has been done by women.

A further advantage is the background research in Barbara Ward's edited volume on *Women in the New Asia* (1963). Information was gathered over two years for the UNESCO volume which remains a classic in the field. The book provided autobiographies of women from Burma, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Other notable biographies of Southeast Asian women include Trabutana's *A Simple One* (1958), Kartini's *Letters of a Javanese Princess* (1964), and Knight's *The Treasured One: The Story of Rudivoravan, Princess of Siam* (1957). These personal accounts are augmented by substantial work on Southeast Asian families, including Mi Mi Khaing's *Burmese Family* (1962), Hildred Geertz' *Javanese Family* (1961), Rosemary Firth's *Housekeeping Among Malay Peasants* (1966), and Sulamith Potter's recent *Family Life in a Northern Thai Village* (1977).

The entrepreneurial activities of women in Southeast Asia were documented by A. G. Dewey in *Peasant Marketing in Java* (1962), and Cristina Szanton in *A Right to Survive: Subsistence Marketing in a Lowland Philippine Town* (1972). Substantial research has also been directed toward women through studies in family planning, and maternal and child health care. In B. J. Chung's extensive bibliography on *The Status of Women and Fertility in Southeast and East Asia*, she views the status of women both as a determinant and a consequence of variations in reproductive behavior (1977:1). In the next few years, we should expect to see more integration between theoretical and applied research focusing on family planning, primary health care, and nutrition.

The gaps in our knowledge of Southeast Asian women in general are reflected also in this collection. For example, we lack coverage of poor urban women who hold their families together and demonstrate astonishing adaptability in the face of extreme poverty. While there has been some work done on Southeast Asian elite women (Van Esterik 1982; Green 1979, 1980), we need to know their relation to other women in their society. Are they alienated from other groups of women, or are they prepared to take supportive or active stands on behalf of less fortunate women? We also lack information on women from tribal societies throughout mainland and island Southeast Asia.

Other research limitations in the area center around the unevenness of geographical coverage. Often work on Javanese women is cited to represent Indonesian women. Research on Thailand is used to represent mainland Southeast Asia, since it is more accessible to Western scholars than Burma, Laos, Cambodia or Vietnam. The work of Hoskins on Vietnamese women (1975), and Ebihara on Khmer women (1974) are easily available and are important exceptions. In the future, work by Southeast Asian scholars should be integrated with the work of Western-based scholars and included in collections such as these. Although several attempts were made to include such work, they did not meet with success. Papanek recognizes the difficulty in keeping in touch with the research being done in developing countries, and attributes it to the poorly developed channels of professional communication (1975:202).

The most significant problem concerns classification of the phrase, the "high status of Southeast Asian women." There is no single agreed upon definition of status. Each author has defined and operationalized the term status in a distinctive manner, making cross-cultural comparisons difficult or inaccurate. Stoler has cautioned that various definitions of status "frequently confuse norms, jural rights, and actual behavior" (1977: 74). Generally, status refers to an individual's social position or rank relative to others in a hierarchy of

prestige, influence or power. Most often a phrase like "the status of women" implies a comparison with men or with Western women.

Evidence on the status of women may include both the actual behavior or women and the ideological evaluation of women's worth. To operationalize a definition of status which can be applied to women in Southeast Asia, we must establish what indicators are most important in specific contexts and how such indicators can be measured. Sanday has proposed measuring the degree to which females have authority or power in the domestic and public domains, and the degree to which females are accorded differential treatment and are respected in the domestic and public domains (1974:191). But in Southeast Asia, domestic acts such as food preparation and presentation may be public performances. And Stoler points out that female control of the domestic domain need not imply that males control the public/social domain. On the contrary, the domestic domain encompasses the social sphere, and women play an important role in social activities (Stoler 1977:85).

In a review of the recent anthropological studies on women's status, Quinn cautions us against seeking a "key" factor to explain the status of women and suggests that it will be more valuable ". . . to treat women's status as a composite of many different variables, often causally independent from one another" (1977:183). Nevertheless, there have been attempts to account for the absence of male dominance in Southeast Asian societies (Goldschmidt and Kunkel 1971). Other authors stress the complementarity of male and female roles in this region, and the lack of exaggerated opposition of male and female ideologies (Engel 1978:169). Factors that have been proposed to account for the position of Southeast Asian women include the availability of new frontier land in an area of relatively low population density, the demands of wet-rice agriculture, the absence of strong centralized states, the predominance of bilateral descent, and female ultimogeniture. (See Winzler, this volume, for an evaluation of these approaches.)

Recently, many Southeast Asian specialists have questioned whether women in Southeast Asia really do have high status. Stoler concludes her study of *Class Structure and Rural Autonomy in Rural Java* with the observation that "the simple generalization that women in Java have a relatively high position obscures fundamental differences in their shared access to and control over productive resources" (1977:89). In a similar vein, Nalla Tan (1974) refutes the idea that there is no discrimination against women in Singapore. And in this volume, several authors caution us against assuming that the lives of Southeast Asian women are timeless or unchanging, and point out discrepancies between mythical past and grim present for Southeast Asian women.

Past and Future

Is there something qualitatively different about the lives of Southeast Asian women? Is there some quality that persists through time and touches the lives of peasant women, urban slum dwellers, and aristocratic elite? Even given the difficulties of measuring status, the wide range of cultural patterns exhibited by the lifestyles of Southeast Asian women, and the clear documentation of discrimination against and exploitation of women, is there still some level at which the cliché is based on fact?

History and myth support the idea of powerful female political and legal figures in Southeast Asia's past. We can cite the example of Shin Saw Bu, a ruling queen of the Mon at Pegu, Burma in the fifteenth century (Nyun-Han 1972:79-82), the ruling female sultans in precolonial Aceh (Jayawardena 1977:35), or the Thai reports of women widely respected for their legal prowess (Engel 1978:166). Certainly, the British recognized something different about the position of Burmese women, particularly in comparison with India. Nyun-Han quotes Harvey's *History of Burma* (1925):

> When greater races bound the feet or veiled the face of their women, or doubted if she

> had a soul, the Burmese held her free and enthroned her as chieftainess and queen (1972:100).

Accepting these myths as accurate representations of past or present reality would be a mistake. But their existence is a challenge to both historians and anthropologists.

Should we expect that the processes of modernization and development will benefit Southeast Asian women in the future? The transfer of Western technology to Southeast Asia may have an unanticipated impact on women's activities. Tinker and Bo Bramsen have suggested that development has had a negative effect on women because development planning has failed to notice and utilize the productive roles which women are playing, has reinforced existing values which restrict women's activities to household, child-bearing, and child-rearing tasks, and has superimposed Western values regarding appropriate work for women in modern society on developing societies (1976:5).

Recently, Linda Lim (1978) has demonstrated the effects of the semiconductor industry on Southeast Asian women in Malaysia and Singapore. These multinational companies exploit the female labor force with low wages, poor working conditions, and constant pressure to increase production. Recreational activities such as beauty contests encourage competitive individualism and promote the image of women as sex objects. Managers argue that electronic assembly work is suitable for women, since, as one Malaysian manager phrased it, "The girls like this routine manual work because it is not demanding, and they don't have to think" (Lim 1978:22).

In rural areas, too, Southeast Asian women appear to be losing out on subsistence options through developments in cash cropping, international trade, and the development of mechanized farming. Boserup cites the decision of European administrators to transfer rights in land from women to men (1970:61). And when communally owned property is converted to individual ownership, property

rights are more often vested in males than females. Stoler notes that advances of the green revolution such as hulling machines have eliminated female employment opportunities (Stoler 1977:87).

Research on issues of relevance to the future of Southeast Asian women should not be hampered by an idealized view of the past. Have the myths and clichés about the high status of Southeast Asian women discouraged examination of discrimination or exploitation? Mi Mi Khaing writes that "it has been said of Burma that she has no feminist movements because none have been necessary; the women have always had all the rights they wanted" (1962:149). What more could Southeast Asian women want? We cannot answer for them but the answers are not hard to imagine--changes in family law giving women legal protection, more income-generating opportunities for women, technological innovations directed towards easing domestic work loads, and more participation in development planning, so that the ideological, economic and social advantages already possessed by the women of Southeast Asia will not be lost through the process of modernization.

Chapter Two

BUDDHISM, SEX-ROLES AND THE THAI ECONOMY[1]

Thomas Kirsch

Simon La Loubère, a perceptive visitor to 17th century Siam, was impressed with "how lazy the ordinary life of the Siamese [commoner] is . . . he does almost nothing but continue sitting or lying, playing, smoking and sleeping." But he goes on to observe "the [Siamese] women plow the land, they sell and buy in the cities" (1693:50). Somewhat later Graham (1912:140-141) commented "the Siamese . . . is a spendthrift and, with rare exceptions, most unbusinesslike." He continues, "The women . . . are always busy . . . traffiking in the bazaars, doing the light work in the fields and marketing." More recently still, *Time* magazine (1965:91-92) reported the deep involvement of contemporary Thai women in the ownership and management of major business enterprises.

While the comments of early observers of the Thai (Siamese) scene are impressionistic and are probably distorted by Western stereotypes and expectations, they highlight a persistent and pervasive pattern in which Thai women play a major role in economic activities. Such a pattern is no doubt conditioned by a variety of complex cultural, social and historical factors. One factor, at least equally persistent and pervasive, is

Theravada Buddhism. I will explore how the values embodied in Buddhism relate to the patterning of sex-roles in Thai society influencing the involvement of Thai women in economic activities.

The Role of Buddhism in Thai Society

Virtually all observers agree on the central role which Buddhism has played and continues to play in the lives of the Thai people. The 13th century inscription of Rama Kamhaeng (Griswold and Prasert 1971) celebrates the importance of Theravada Buddhism in the Kingdom of Sukhothai, often taken as the historic foundation of modern Thai society. Early observers of Siamese society such as Gervaise (1928, originally 1685), La Loubère (1693) and Young (1898) were struck with the hold of the Buddhist monkhood on the populace and the wide diffusion of religious interests. Siamese participation in war was frequently justified by religious reasons and objects of religious veneration were often the symbols of victory (Vella 1957:107). Such events as the "revolution" of 1688 (Hutchinson 1940) and the downfall of King Taksin in 1782 (Chakrabongse 1960) were related directly to threats to Buddhist values and ideals.

Contemporary observers of rural Thai society such as Sharp et al. (1953), de Young (1955), Goldsen and Ralis (1957), Kaufman (1960), Kingshill (1960), Phillips (1965) and Tambiah (1970) are also in agreement that Buddhism plays a vital role in the lives of Thai villagers. The village temple (*wát*) is the symbolic center of village life and its monks are the most prestigious residents of the village. The annual cycle is structured around Buddhist festivals and ritual events. Contributions of alms and service to the monks and temple make significant inroads in the villagers' income and time. Young men are strongly encouraged to spend a period of time in the monkhood which is believed to transform their characters from "raw" (*dìp*) to "ripe" (*sùk*), thereby enhancing their desirability as potential husbands.

Buddhism is no less important in urban and national Thai society. Although the Thais have been notably tolerant of other religions and there have been constitutional guarantees of religious freedom within the kingdom, Buddhism is the state religion and the King must be a Buddhist to fullfil his role as Protector of the Faith. A government department oversees the administration of monastic properties and civil servants may enter the monkhood (*sangha*) for periods without loss of seniority. In a seminal article Hanks (1962) evokes the interplay of Buddhist concepts such as that of "merit" (*bun*) and the dynamics of Thai society, while Keyes (1971) demonstrates that Buddhist institutions provide a skeleton for the national integration of the Thai polity. Tambiah (1976) and Reynolds (1977) have shown how Buddhism has shaped the Thai political order, and Ayal (1963) has noted the implications of Buddhism for economic modernization.

These observations indicate that Buddhism forms an integral, long-lasting and pervasive part of the Thai value system. Buddhist-based values are not restricted to strictly "religious" attitudes and actions but influence other sectors of life as well. Here I want to investigate how Buddhist values influence individuals' attitudes toward economic activities. These attitudes are related to the patterning of sex-roles in Thai society. First I will describe aspects of Thai Buddhism which seem strategic for understanding Thai society. Then I will suggest their relationships to the Thai family, the patterning of sex-roles and the shape of the Thai economy.

Features of Thai Buddhism

The formal goal of Buddhist action may be characterized as "Other-Worldly." The Buddha taught the transience of worldly things, the falsity of the notion of individual personality, the dangers of desire and ignorance, and a way of escape from the miseries of endless rebirth and suffering. Although the actual knowledge of sophisticated Buddhist philosophy is

differentially diffused throughout Thai society, its essential "Other-Worldliness" is still the focus for action. For the sophisticated, the goal of action may be *nirvana* and ultimate extinction; for the less sophisticated, it may be an enhanced salvation position through birth in a higher social status in the next incarnation (Young 1898:277). For both, the ultimate reward for action is not necessarily expected to come in this life. It is notable, however, that Thai often equate contemporary good or bad social position or fortune and misfortune with good or bad *karma* or "merit."

The means of achieving Buddhist goals is through meritorious action and the accumulation of merit (*bun*). There are traditional merit-making acts, such as giving alms to monks, building a temple, "giving" a son for ordination into the *sangha*, etc. More generally, merit is accumulated by living in accordance with the Buddhist normative system, as embodied in the *dhamma* and the precepts. Merit-making acts are specific examples of the more general normative system. Indeed, merit-making was such an important element in Thai action that Young considered it to be "the sum and substance of their (Siamese) religious faith" (Young 1898:274). Recent observers find that merit and merit-making are still vital parts of Thai life (Blanchard 1958:115; Kaufman 1960:96-115).

Merit is a non-static quality. Every act is potentially merit-making (or merit-losing). Conceptually, each individual at any particular time has a "position" in terms of Buddhist goals that is defined by his merit/demerit balance. This position is, however, never a fixed position. Through subsequent merit-making (or losing) acts the individual's position is constantly altering. There are no definitions of how much merit is "enough." In Buddhist terms, each person performs meritorious acts as often as he can and as lavishly as he can. Such decisions rest with the individual conditioned by his life situation. In so far as he has internalized the action orientation involved in Buddhism, the individual can never "rest on his laurels," nor is her "eternally damned," but he must actively pursue meritorious action (see Alabaster 1871, passim;

Griswold 1961:20-21; Hanks 1962).

The concepts of *karma* and "rebirth" introduce ambiguities and uncertainties into Buddhist action (see Obeyesekere 1968:21-25). The fund of merit which the individual possesses from previous existences can never be known with assurance. Birth in a low social status may be taken as an indication of a low merit balance, by "paying off" a large debt of demerit or performing some particularly meritorious act may also skyrocket the individual to a high merit position, a shift which is believed to be correlated with a corresponding change in terms of social status. High-born individuals conversely, may be plummeted to the lowest levels of merit (and social) position.

Buddhism places the formal responsibility for moral action directly on the individual. There are no intercessors, nor can anyone help or hinder the individual in his quest for merit. The monk, the government official, the peasant is each seeking to enhance his merit position in his own way. It is up to each one individually to decide how far he should go. In some respects this might be viewed as a "competition for merit." The individual makes his decisions regarding merit-seeking by reference to his peers, using them as a model and at the same time serving as a model for them. However, merit is not a zero-sum entity and any such competition is thus relative rather than absolute.

The content of Buddhist morality, as well as the cognitive framework of the Buddhist's world, are contained in the *dhamma*, popular stories of previous lives of the Buddha (Jataka Tales), the precepts, and the sermons preached by Buddhist monks. Buddhist morality is frequently phrased in negative terms, e.g., "not to steal," "not to follow lustful love," etc. The emphasis on "making" merit indicates that Buddhist morality is two-sided: on the one hand, one is enjoined to positive acts of "kindness," "compassion," "generosity" to "other creatures" in general; on the other hand,

deep-attachments to particular others or things, or to particular worldly desires, are indications of a "rootedness" in the world which must be actively overcome. Many of the traditional merit-producing acts involve elements of "anonymity," e.g., giving to monks who are defined as anonymous; construction of temples for unspecified others to worship in; leaving water at the roadside for unknown travelers to drink. "Greed," "miserliness," and other qualities which suggest attachment to worldly things are strongly condemned.[2]

The cognitive framework of the Buddhist's world consists, in part, of a "hierarchy of merit," which may have infinite gradations (Hanks 1962). There are, however, certain general categories of relative merit which are linked to the social organization. The monk with his special relationship to Buddhist goals stands at the pinnacle of merit-positions and the social order. The King and government officials are next, though formally deferring to the monks' position without question. The mass of the peasantry stands at the bottom of the merit and of the social hierarchy, although the idealized hierarchy extends "below" human society to classes of animals, etc. and "above" society to deities (*thewada:*) as well. Within each category there are further gradations, but the categories themselves tend to be mutually exclusive (see Kirsch 1975a).

The Buddhist orientation toward action might then be characterized as highly "individualistic," activistically-oriented to a goal which is essentially "Other Worldly." Applying this concept to the Thai social scene highlights certain general characteristics.

I have suggested that the significant Buddhist motivation for action is to accumulate merit, not wealth, and that the reward for meritorious acts is not necessarily expected to come in this life (see Spiro 1966). Wealth in this world is viewed as "transient" (unreal), merit as "real." One gains merit and amasses "spiritual wealth" through the expenditure of worldly wealth in performing meritorious acts appropriate

to one's status. This spiritual wealth cannot be spent in this life but is useful in "buying" a better future existence. A Buddhist sermon from Northern Thailand illustrates this view rather well:

> . . . . (A moral person) will be praised by sages like the Lord Buddha. He will be prosperous both in the path of the world and in the path of religion. He will use his wealth to make merit and to give gifts. For wealth is good only for spending and for one's livelihood and happiness. When one dies one cannot take one's possessions with him, but must leave them behind for others. But when one makes merit by giving gifts one gathers up wealth in the world to come. There it will provide happiness for one in heaven. When one is reborn as a man, this spiritual wealth will follow one so that one will be reborn in a good family of wealth and will be happy. If a person who is reborn does some work, he will advance and progress in contrast to a man who has no merit. Truly a man without merit cannot compete with a man with merit (Kingshill 1960:260).

Thus, one is currently reaping the rewards of the past merit which he has accumulated while accumulating a new balance. The focus of Buddhist action, however, is not on enjoyment of the fruits of this past merit but on enhancing one's position in the next existence(s) through continued merit-making acts. This involves expending wealth in meeting Buddhist normative obligations, not greedily accumulating it nor hedonistically enjoying it.

The uncertainties of one's merit position and the activist orientation lead to a sort of "reality-testing" with regard to role performance. Embree (1950) was so impressed with the fluidity and high degree of "individual variability" characteristic of Thailand that he felt it involved virtually a different kind of cultural integration.[3] He characterized this type of integration as "loose-structure," in contrast to the "tight-structure" of China, Japan, and Viet-Nam. In "tightly-structured"

societies there are rigidly defined and clearly ordered role prescriptions. In Thailand, Embree argued, action is not directed to a central tendency, a mean of role behavior, but is distributed throughout a range of appropriate behavior. One might say, in effect, the attempt is being made to find one's real position as defined by *karma* and current merit balance, since there are virtually no external criteria by which this position can be prescriptively known. This fluidity of behavior involved not only shifting action within roles, but shifts between roles and between status categories as well.

Other elements of Thai society which might be linked to the lack of ascription, the activistic orientation, and uncertainties of one's status are the Thai predilection for gambling, and the high degree of social and geographic mobility which have been characteristic of Thai society (Kirsch 1966). The expectation of one's "merit-status" suddenly paying off, whisking the successful gambler to new heights, as well as the actual frequent fall in status, with the loss of all worldly wealth (possibly including the loss of liberty of his wife, children, and even his own) accord with this view (Gervaise 1928:54).

Thailand is notable for the historic ease with which low-born individuals have achieved high social status, and, conversely, those of high status have with startling suddenness been degraded to the lowest levels. The significance of this mobility is not simply its empirical occurrence but the fact that it does not disrupt either the social order or the personalities of those affected. Perhaps the most striking examples of this mobility are found in the political sphere.[4] King Taksin, for example, could not claim the throne by birth. He was an official, and in fact appears to have been ethnically a Chinese who had been adopted by a Thai nobleman as a child (Skinner 1957:20). Other Thai kings who "achieved" the throne include Prasat Thong (1629-1656, see Wood 1924:172), and Petcharaja (1688-1703), see Hutchinson 1940).

Historically, high positions were held at the pleasure of the King. Even the highest ranking individuals

could be degraded to the lowest levels (Gervaise 1928:35; Vella 1957:9). The numerous life-histories of "rags-to-riches" which occurred in the Chinese community in Thailand are further examples of this general process, particularly those which resulted in assimilation of the successful Chinese into the Thai upper class (Skinner 1957:138ff).

The broad status outlines and the general hierarchical structure of Thai society are fixed, but the positions of individuals within the society are not. The status categories of Monk, Official, and Commoner are hierarchically ranked and mutually exclusive, but movement between these categories was always potentially free and frequent. In particular, shifts between either of the other status categories into the monkhood was not merely frequent but expected for every male.

Ordination in the *sangha* involves a total shift, both in the action of the individual and the actions of others to him. No matter what his antecedents or expectations for the future, from the moment of entering the *sangha* to the time of leaving it, the individual acts and is treated in a manner appropriate to that status (Smyth 1898:22).

The involvement of individuals within any of these categories might be seen as a "total" involvement. That is, occupation of one of these statuses conditions all other features of the action of the individual. This may involve an almost complete shift in behavior, and a shift in "identity" (as exemplified in "style of life" and social action) such as that involved in becoming a monk. Government officials, for example, were "absorbed" into their offices, and a shift in official position involved a virtual change in social identity (Landon 1949:126ff). The loss of one's official position involved a total loss of fame, wealth, and power (La Loubère 1693:78). The equanimity with which criminals and even traitors were historically reinstated to responsible positions after punishment suggests that there was no "carry-over" of the personality which had committed the misdeeds (La Loubère 1969:105). Perhaps it is this quality of Thai society which prompts the

uneasiness of the Western visitor who expects a more stable base in interpersonal relations (Hanks 1962).

Focusing exclusively on the element of relative rank may lead us to overlook a highly important aspect of the normative system. That is, although there are important gradations of relative rank, there is also a degree of freedom of movement through the various ranks. This involves two aspects: on the one hand, a minimization of ascriptive loyalties of all kinds--so that there is minimal "drag" on individuals holding them down (or up); on the other hand, virtually no position is ascriptively allocated or cut off from achievement. To allow the greatest freedom in seeking out one's "karma-merit" defined position, the highest positions, including the Kingship, could be aspired to by anyone.

The Thai Family and Sex Roles

Bearing in mind the elements involved in Buddhism and these general features of Thai society, we may now focus on the Thai family. In so far as kinship relations are stressed at all, nuclear family relations are strongly emphasized and extended kin relations de-emphasized. Although, on marriage, a couple may reside for a time with the wife's family, the typical and ideal residence unit is an independent nuclear household. The relative unimportance of extended kin ties is indicated by the lack of any obligatory patterned expectations of reciprocal rights or duties between categories of extended kin. There are no normative restrictions on either geographic or social mobility. Ties based on neighborhood are frequently of equal or greater importance than kin-based ties. Even the institution of the "surname" was introduced into Thailand (in 1917) after Western contacts.

De-emphasis of kin-based ascriptive ties is found both between closely related nuclear families and within the nuclear family. Even kinship relations allow a great deal of "individual autonomy" (Hanks 1949).

Inheritance is formally equal to all children. Choice of marriage mates is generally based on the preferences of the individuals concerned, and a well-established pattern of elopement exists to circumvent possible parental objections. Further, divorce is relatively easy on the part of either husband or wife. After a period of "indulgence" in early childhood, child training emphasizes "independence and self-reliance" (Anuman 1961:176-179; see also Sensenig 1975). Benedict (1945:36) points out that threats of rejection from the family are frequent and Piker (1975:102) observes that children are often "given away" to be reared by other families.

Such a family system minimizes any stress on ascriptive ties which might also allow considerable freedom for movement through "merit positions" and actual social statuses. Thus, the individual is free to move through status positions to find his "merit-defined" place with minimal hindrance based on ascribed status. While birth in the higher echelons of Thai society undoubtedly conferred considerable advantage there were mechanisms which tended to shift higher levels downward such as the "declining descent rule" which merged royal relatives with commoners in five generations (Haas 1951). To some degree all positions had to be earned and validated by achievement or meritorious (or demeritorious) action.

Such a family system also meets the functional prerequisite of any society to recruit new members through a stable family system (Aberle et al. 1950) and is functionally adaptive to the Buddhist defined cultural system. However, given the stress on individual responsibility for moral action and status there is one potential source of strain. If each partner in a marriage were attempting to maximize his or her merit position at any cost and regardless of the needs of the other a "war of all against all" within the family might result and the family could break down. Such a potentiality would be minimized if the husband and wife were not competing for the same merit position. This is achieved by defining the relation of women to Buddhist goals as qualitatively different from that of men. This is most

strikingly manifested in denying women access to the highest Buddhist defined status possible to achieve in this world--monkhood. Any woman who aspires to achieve this exalted status must be reborn as a man in some future life.

A man's major merit-making act is ordination in the *sangha*, in effect a flight from the world and from particular relationships. A woman's major merit-making act is "giving" a son for ordination. Thus, a woman's merit-mobility is tied to a role in the world, that of wife-mother, and thus to particular relationships. Because men can achieve the highest Buddhist role their relationship to Buddhist norms and values is more intense and they must be more sensitized to them than women. Because women are inextricably linked to the world the intensity of their relationship and their sensitivity to Buddhist values and norms is qualitatively different from that of men. Symptomatic of this difference is the taboo on physical contact between monks and women, even mothers and sisters, parallel to the taboo on monks handling money.[5] This difference does not mean that men are "more religious" than women or that they are more active in merit-making. Actually, women are consistently more diligent in performing routine merit-making activities such as feeding the monks or attending temple services. In fact, one rationale for this diligence on the part of women is that they "need" this merit more than men.

The qualitatively different relationships of Thai men and women to Buddhist roles, norms and values may help us to understand the observations of La Loubère and Graham that were cited at the beginning of this essay. These observations highlighted the involvement of Thai women in economic activities and made invidious comparisons between the abilities of Thai men and women. These observations are supported by others. For example, a Chinese visitor to Siam during the Ming dynasty observed that "when there are affairs to be settled (in Siam) they are settled by women. In determination and judgment the women really surpass the men" (cited in

Benedict 1945:3). Gervaise (1928:37) notes with respect to legal cases that women "state their cases more fluently than men do . . . and they know much better how to defend their interests." And, La Loubère (1693:73) generalizes that "the wives of the people managing all trade do enjoy a perfect liberty."

The differential relationship of men and women to Buddhist values and roles may also help account for stereotyped attitudes towards men and women. For example, men are regarded as being more "patient" (*mi: khwa:m ?ot thon)* than women (Benedict 1945:39). But, Thai "patience" does not imply the kind of passivity associated with patience by English speakers. For Thais, patience involves an active restraint or control, an ability to endure suffering, to be courageous under adversity. Manly patience suggests overcoming hindrances which stand in the way of achieving a desired (e.g., Buddhist) goal (see Kroeber 1948:590-591; Kingshill 1961:252-253). To be patient implies a capacity to overcome or put aside "worldly" demands and interests which might stand in the way of attaining (Buddhist) goals. Similarly, Landon (1939:148) implies that women are deemed less capable than men of manifesting *chĕ:y* a kind of impassive demeanor or equanimity in the face of adversity or challenge. Both "patience" and *chĕ:y* can be seen as qualities associated not only with men in general but as especially valuable traits for Buddhist monks (i.e., men) in particular.

When Westerners encounter Thai women engaged in economic pursuits it is easy to misinterpret this phenomenon in Western terms, to see this as an instance of the high status and "equality" of Thai women (Hanks and Hanks 1963). Certainly the situation of Thai women has always been freer and easier than that of women in the neighboring South Asian and East Asian cultural complexes. However, the involvement of Thai women in economic activities might also be seen as conditioned by a Buddhist devaluation of economic endeavors in general and the relatively disadvantaged position of women in relation to Buddhist values and roles.

Expectations and stereotypes based on Buddhism provide exemplars for the behavior and attitudes of Thai men and women. Men are deemed to have a greater capacity than women to manifest these Buddhist elements in their daily lives. But the introduction of such Buddhist norms as "kindness," "generosity" and "compassion" into economic activities would introduce elements of irrationality and unpredictability into trade, which would seriously hinder or disrupt economic relationships. A man has the potential for following the example of Prince Vessantara, celebrated in one of the most popular Jataka tales, and give away all his worldly goods, including his wife and children, out of compassion for another. At the very least, men must be concerned that they not be thought to manifest actions and attitudes of the "miser" or a "stingy" man, actions and attitudes which however devalued by Buddhist norms would facilitate pursuit of profit.

However, Western observers have noted that a Thai woman can be more "calculating," "impatient" and "know her interests better" than a man. Thus, women can allow worldly interests to distract them from Buddhist norms and goals. Or, perhaps more accurately, a woman cannot help but do so. These features facilitate the involvement of women in economic relationships.

It seems clear that the Thai-dominated part of the private sector of the pre-modern economy was in the hands of women. Private inter-regional trade tended to fall into non-Thai hands (Gervaise 1928:26-29). No class of women traders arose to take control of the marketing system of the entire kingdom. Instead, the role of women in the Thai economy remained petty and localized, in part because they remained oriented to Buddhist goals. Women might still attempt to enhance their merit status in future existences, but such attempts were tied to being a wife and a mother.

Aspects of the Thai Economy

During the pre-modern era Thai external trade was

dominated by royal monopolies which might be regarded as much a part of the foreign relations on the kingdom as economic ventures. Much of this trade was carried on under the aegis of "tributary" relations with China and other Asian states. The wealth gained through this trade was used by the monarchs to support religious activities, build temples and maintain the royal court (Ingram 1955:24).

While Thai kings could control and benefit from such external trade, they were also constrained by Buddhist norms and values. Thus, the official positions involved directly in such trading ventures were commonly filled by non-Thai, e.g., Chinese, Indians, Malays and occasionally Occidentals, selected for such duties. It is striking that these commercial activities that might cause strains for a Thai Buddhist to perform were routinely carried out by non-Thai.

The system of women-dominated localized market relations was adequate for the demands of the pre-modern Thai economy. However, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there were increasing pressures from Western powers to open up Siam to international trade. Prior to this such pressures had been balked by the monarch's monopoly of trade which included arbitrary elements resented by Western traders. Indeed, the official attitude was one of discouraging foreign trade completely rather than attempting to eliminate possible competitors (Van Vliet 1910:93 [originally 1638]; La Loubère 1693:113). But, the Western effort to gain access to Asian markets was increasingly accompanied by threats of force of arms and political domination.

During the reign of Rama III (1824-1851) British influence in neighboring Burma came to a head and the Thai king agreed to establish treaty relations with Western powers through the Burney Treaty of 1826, the first such treaty since the seventeenth century. The increased external trade engendered by the Burney Treaty also led to some expansion of internal trade and increased monetarization of the Thai economy. It also

led to a decrease in traditional corvée labor and the use of hired, often non-Thai, labor for government projects. The government also gave up some of its direct involvement in economic activities by auctioning rights to various monopolies, e.g., gambling, opium, fishing, to the highest, often Chinese, bidder.

These processes continued in the subsequent reign of Rama IV (1851-1868) also known as King Mongkut. Partially as a result of Western dissatisfaction with the Burney Treaty, Mongkut agreed to sign the Bowring Treaty of 1855, which effectively opened Siam to Western merchants and linked its economy firmly to world markets. An important factor in leading the Thai king to reverse the traditional pattern of avoidance of such economic links was fear of colonial domination, forcible Western intervention and the loss of independence.

The Bowring Treaty and the other commercial treaties which quickly followed it resulted in a rapid expansion of the Thai economy, the development of new economic roles and the virtual abdication of the government from direct participation in trade. The expansion of economic roles and the creation of new opportunities were not accompanied by a frantic rush of Thai to fill the new roles nor to take advantage of the increased opportunities. Instead, non-Thai, in particular Chinese, were actively encouraged to take on these new roles. As Ingram (1955:37) notes:

> One of the outstanding features of the period since 1850 has been the general willingness of the Thai to leave the entrepreneurship function to foreigners. This was true not only in the case of the middleman organization. In any new development which required the application of business methods and the use of individual entrepreneurship, the Thai were rarely to be found. Another striking feature of this period of Thailand's history was the existence of a supply of foreign entrepreneurship which was willing to flow into the country, and allowed to.

This movement of non-Thai into an expanding economic structure occurred at all levels of entrepreneurship and management, and extended even into the expanding labor force in rice-mills, as dockhands, and in the railroads as construction workers and as engineers.

The Thai government actively encouraged the increased immigration of Chinese as well as the allocation of the newly created economic roles to non-Thai. The Thai corvée system of labor was gradually replaced by use of hired (again usually non-Thai) labor. Perhaps one of the reasons for the use of hired labor for public works was efficiency since corvée labor was notoriously inefficient. The explicit motivation given by Rama III and Rama IV, who were both instrumental in establishing this policy, was a more benevolent one--to avoid the "vexation, misery and compulsion" of impressed Thai labor, and to "leave the farming classes alone" (Thompson 1941:215; Ingram 1955:210).

While encouraging Chinese immigrants to take on the new economic roles and simultaneously encouraging the Thai to retain their traditional roles, the government's policies also discouraged the development of large estates. Thailand remained a nation of small, independent free-holders with relative equality of economic condition and opportunity. Traditional channels of mobility were still kept open or expanded. Thai were not actively discouraged from taking on the new roles if they chose, but few in fact did. The Thai Buddhist orientation to action was enough to make such roles unattractive to them, or, if they did take them on, to make them less than successes in competition with the Chinese. The Chinese orientation to action was well suited to economic success under the conditions they found in Thailand (Skinner 1957:91-99).

The Chinese and the Thai Economy

The question might be raised as to why the Thai, who had resisted economic control of Westerners so

successfully for so long, were suddenly so willing, in fact almost eager, to place this control in the hands of immigrant Chinese. The situation is complex but a partial explanation may lie in the fact that Chinese economic control tended not to remain in the same "foreign" hands over a period of time. The children and especially the grandchildren of immigrant Chinese were eventually assimilated to Thai cultural status and incorporated into Thai society. In contrast to other instances in Southeast Asia, such as the *peranakan* of Indonesia and the *baba* of Melaka, no intermediate Sino-Thai society developed.

Two factors were important in this process of assimilation of Chinese into Thai society. One is the character of Thai society itself which allowed for "achievement" of Thai ethnic status by the Chinese. Another important factor was the dearth of immigrant Chinese women. If a Chinese immigrant wished to marry he was forced to marry a Thai woman--and Thai women were not unwilling to marry such Chinese.[6] Of course, the Thai mothers of such mixed marriages socialized their children as Thai. Skinner (1957:131) notes that by the third generation most of these children of Sino-Thai ancestry considered themselves to be Thai.

The process of assimilation of Chinese into Thai society took place at all levels of society; however, the Thai government's policy was to reward successful Chinese merchants and officials with noble titles and high status positions, thus easing the way for their identification with Thai interests and eventual assimilation.[7] The cream of the immigrant Chinese population was constantly skimmed off the Chinese group and merged with the Thai population. Their places were taken by new immigrants, setting the stage for a repetition of the process and ensuring the continuity of a "foreign" group to perform the necessary economic tasks. Skinner (1957:134) notes that:

> The comparatively rapid assimilation of Chinese descendents in Siam also meant that the perpetuation of Chinese society there was dependent

> on continued immigration. The frequent references to the cultural persistence of Chinese in Siam during the nineteenth century . . . are witnesses not to a peculiar unchangeableness on the part of the Chinese, but to the continual re-inforcement of Chinese society through immigration.

More Recent Developments in the Thai Economy

This process served as a safeguard for Thai society, since it implied that while control of the economy would remain in "foreign" hands, these particular hands would be ever changing. No stable complexes of economic power could develop to threaten Thai autonomy. This convenient situation did not last long. In the period following World War I, more and more Chinese immigrants were accompanied by their wives, enabling them and their children to retain their Chinese identity, and more and more Chinese were immigrating. This resulted in an "imbalance" between the assimilation rate and the immigration rate which served as a threat to the autonomy of Thai society. In this same period, perhaps partially as a result of this factor, anti-Chinese feelings in Thailand came to a head, culminating shortly before World War II in a highly nationalistic Thai regime. One important aim of this regime was the "Thai-ification" of the economy, and steps were taken to eliminate Chinese economic control.

One of the measures adopted by the new regime reserved certain occupations exclusively to Thai and was aimed at pushing the Chinese out of these occupations. Through rigid police enforcement, the Thai government could be as effective as it wished in forcing Chinese out of these occupations. The effects on the Thai population were less than spectacular.

> A Bangkok radio broadcast in 1943 complained: The government has done its utmost to urge Thai to sell rice and pigs, but they refused and the Chinese are holding the whole trade.

> Schools were opened to teach Thai hairdressing, but no pupils appeared (cited in Skinner 1957:276).

Perhaps the type of action necessary to fill these roles is inconsistent with the Thai Buddhist orientation to action.

Thai Occupational Division of Labor by Sex

Since it is widely acknowledged that the Chinese play a predominant role in the Thai economy, it would be interesting to see how Thai men and Thai women are distributed in various occupations which are dominated by Thai or by Chinese. Skinner (1957:301-303) lists occupational statistics derived from the 1947 Bangkok census that are dated but conveniently classified by ethnicity (Chinese and Thai) and by sex. Examination of these statistics supports the view that Thai women are overrepresented in economically-oriented occupations.

Based on the ratio of Chinese to Thai in the total sample (1.2/1), the statistics were first sorted according to occupations in which Chinese predominated and occupations in which Thai predominated. Using only the Thai population in the sample, the occupations were further sorted into those in which Thai men predominated or those in which Thai women predominated, using the ratio of Thai women to Thai men in the total sample (1/1.5). These procedures yield four categories of occupations: A) Occupations that are Chinese-dominated in which Thai males are overrepresented; B) Occupations that are Chinese-dominated in which Thai women are overrepresented; C) Occupations that are Thai-dominated in which Thai men are overrepresented; and D) Occupations that are Thai-dominated in which Thai women are overrepresented. (Note that only the Thai labor force is represented in the figures examined.)

Table 1

Incidence of Thai Men and Thai Women in
Chinese or Thai-Dominated Occupations, 1947

	Thai Men Predominate	Thai Women Predominate
Chinese-Dominated Occupations	9,200 Thai W 28,900 Thai M	32,900 Thai W 10,800 Thai M
Thai-Dominated Occupations	3,300 Thai W 47,500 Thai M	18,400 Thai W 12,300 Thai M

Source: G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1957:301-303. (Figures rounded to nearest hundred.)

On the basis of pure chance distribution we would expect about 24,000 Thai males in each cell and about 15,700 Thai females. The actual figures indicate that Thai women are notably overrepresented in occupations in the Chinese-dominated sectors of the economy while Thai men are found mainly in occupations in the Thai-dominated sectors of the economy.

If we examine the types of occupations found in each of these cells they further support the hypothesis that Thai women are overrepresented in distinctly economic type roles. They also reveal more clearly the kinds of occupations that are attractive to Thai men.

Occupations in Cell A:
Chinese-Dominated--Thai Men Predominant

9. business clerks
11. carpenters, furniture makers
12. repairmen
14. metal workers (base metals)

15. miscellaneous technicians
25. workers in building trades
29. sailors, ships' crews
31. barbers
33. unskilled labor

Occupations in Cell B:
Chinese-Dominated--Thai Women Predominant

2. large business owners, managers
6. small business owners, managers
16. tailors
17. jewelers
18. miscellaneous craftsmen
20. market sellers (in stalls)
21. weavers, dyers
23. shoemakers
24. hotel and restaurant employees
28. actors
32. hawkers, petty market sellers

Occupations in Cell C:
Thai-Dominated--Thai Men Predominant

1. high-ranking government officials
3. high status professionals
4. high office staff
5. lower government officials
8. government clerks
10. high status industrial staff
13. auto, truck, bus drivers

Occupations in Cell D:
Thai-Dominated--Thai Women Predominant

7. lesser and semi-professional
19. cooks, bakers, food processors
22. hairdressers
26. farmers and fishermen
27. market gardeners
30. low status domestic and service

Of the five occupations which most strongly suggest economic orientations, all five occur in cells in which Thai women dominate, four falling in Cell B where Chinese dominate the economy, i.e., 2. large business owners, managers; 6. small business owners, managers; 20. market sellers (in stalls); and 32. hawkers, petty market sellers. The remaining economically-oriented occupation, 27. market gardeners, falls in Cell D, where the Thai dominate the economy. It is precisely because of the contribution of Thai women that the ratio of Chinese to Thai favors the Thai. That is, there are twice as many Thai women as Thai men listed in this occupation. If the ratio of Thai women to Thai men in this occupation were the expected one, the ratio of Chinese to Thai would favor the Chinese.

Thai men predominate in occupations found in Cell C, occupations which have a "bureaucratic" character, particularly those associated with government service. Since these statistics are derived from Bangkok, the seat of national government in Thailand, it is hardly surprising to find so many Thai men engaged in such occupations. However, these figures must also be viewed in light of the overall pattern of occupations.[8] From this perspective, the predominance of Thai men in these bureaucratic occupations reflects two things. On the one hand, they reflect a significant preference for such occupations (see Landon 1939:265, 275). On the other hand, they reflect a significant disinterest in other types of occupations, particularly those of trade and commerce. Just as we can argue that Buddhist values and role definitions encourage Thai women to take on economic roles, we might also argue that the religious factor plays some role in shaping men's occupational preferences toward bureaucratic roles (Kirsch 1975a).

Developments in Modern Thai Buddhism

While Buddhist-influenced role definitions may be only one factor operating in a complex situation to shape occupational preferences they can not be dismissed.

Any changes in Thai Buddhism, particularly changes that effect the relationship of men or women to Buddhist goals and achievements, might have broad implications for the shape of Thai society. One such development is the foundation of the *Thammayut* group of monks within the Thai *sangha*. The *Thammayut* group was founded by Mongkut in the early nineteenth century during his long stay in the monkhood prior to his assuming the kingship. Its aim was to upgrade Thai Buddhism by weeding out unorthodox elements and by strengthening monastic discipline. Among other things, the tightening of monastic discipline favored by the Thammayut monks made service as a monk more difficult to achieve, thereby providing a degree of legitimacy for men to remain outside the *sangha* and achieve in the secular sphere (see Kirsch 1975b). Presumably this sanction for secular activity reenforced the traditional preference of Thai men for bureaucratic occupations reflected in the statistics cited above. This development coincided with the expansion of the Thai national government initiated by Mongkut's successor as King, Chulalongkorn.

Swearer (1970) has observed more recent changes in the theological and institutional framework of Thai Buddhism. Among the more intriguing developments here are the efforts of Buddhahasa Bhikkhu to redefine the basic tenets of Buddhism for the modern age including such fundamental concepts as *nirvana*, *karma*, merit, and rebirth. Buddhahasa has found a following especially amongst students and elite members of Thai society. Another development in Thai Buddhism is the increasing popularity of lay meditation. Traditionally Buddhist meditation was associated particularly with the monastic role. However, in recent years lay meditation centers have proliferated. While much of this has involved monastic mentors, as John Van Esterik points out in this volume, several Thai women have become famous as meditation masters, providing instruction not only to lay men and women but even having a monastic following as well. This represents a fundamental change in the relationship of women to Buddhist values and roles. While it is still too early to predict the long range results of this development it is one that holds significant implications for the future definition of Buddhist sex roles and also for the non-religious spheres of Thai society.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper benefitted from the comments of G. William Skinner, Charles Keyes, David Wyatt, R.B. Jones, Jr. and Dana Lee. Errors of fact or interpretation are the exclusive responsibility of the author.

2. While giving to anonymous others is valued, the role of anonymous giver is not. Great care is taken to insure that the identity of a merit-maker and his contribution is widely known.

3. Since its inception Embree's notion of "loose structure" has generated considerable debate. A number of Thailand specialists evaluate this concept in Evers (1969).

4. Evers (1966) argues that opportunities for social mobility especially in the bureaucratic public sector have significantly diminished in contemporary Thailand. Kirsch (1966) discusses the various channels of mobility available to contemporary rural villagers.

5. Thai women thus appear to be identified with "This Worldliness" which poses a threat to Buddhist "Other Worldliness." King Mongkut, for example, characterized spinsters and divorcees as "artful women" who viewed monks as "fattened hogs" to be "driven crazy" by womanly wiles and lured from the monkhood into marriage (cited in Moffat 1961:163-164).

6. Skinner (1957:143-148) suggests a similarity between the personalities of Chinese men and Thai women due to their common interest in trading. In view of the results of intermarriage between Chinese men and Thai women we might also view Thai women as seducing "This Worldly" Chinese--at least their children and grandchildren--into becoming "Other Worldly" Thai. This view would coincide with Mongkut's notion that Thai women are dangerously seductive yet give it a Buddhist legitimacy.

7. The official approval of Sino-Thai intermarriage which facilitated the assimilation process might be compared to a 1657 decree of King Prasat Thong forbidding marriage of Thai women to various foreigners (English, Dutch, Japanese, Malay) because their progeny would serve as spies and act against the interest of the Siamese state thereby endangering Buddhism.

8. Although he does not address the issues raised in this paper Deyo (1975) provides an interesting discussion of the work culture and attitudes of Thai men and women and Chinese men and women engaged in white-collar occupations.

Chapter Three

WOMEN MEDITATION TEACHERS IN THAILAND

John Van Esterik

The Argument

The saying that in Theravada Buddhist countries such as Thailand women are spiritually inferior to men is now a cliché. It is probably based on the fact that only men can become monks, and that the majority of men do become monks, if only for a short time. The position of monk has the quintessential features of the religious role in Theravada Buddhism. One of these features is the teaching of the *dhamma*, teachings of the Buddha, to the laity. Perhaps seventy percent of all men in Central Thailand become monks (many for about five months) and thus a majority of men participate in teaching the *dhamma*. Women are expected to be more concerned with worldly affairs, especially those regarding money and family. Since men assume the role of monk at some point in their lives they are more closely associated with otherworldly goals and the transmission of the Buddha's teachings.

Yet, some women in Thailand have become major religious leaders and interpreters of the Buddhist scriptures. This paper discusses two women in Bangkok who lead major lay Buddhist meditation societies. They transmit the Buddha's thought to their followers, many of whom are monks, and are so well-known that one,

Naeb Mahanirananda, was included in a recent book on Theravada Buddhist meditation teachers (Kornfield 1977).

This paper does not argue that Thai women have been liberated and can now teach the *dhamma*. Rather, the presence of women in such an apparently anomalous role informs us about the nature of the characteristic position of women in present day Thai society. Women are barred from being monks, but women can seek positions of high status in certain areas of Thai society. Thai women can be educated. They can teach, amass money and property, and become professionals in many fields. Thai men recognize the strengths of women and are willing to accept their authority if it appears warranted.

What follows immediately is a discussion of the doctrinal, political and ideological background which supports the emergence of these female leaders of meditation societies. Then the activities of the teachers are described followed by an analysis and explanation of the phenomena.

Doctrine

Buddhist doctrine and practice is tolerant of female religious activity partly because sex distinctions are not relevant ultimately for salvation. To clarify, there are believed to be several rebirths before any one life-force achieves final salvation or *nirvana*. Thus it would be possible for a woman in this life to be a man in the next. The road to nirvana is thought to be a long one requiring many lifetimes and many rebirths.

The Pali canon, the orthodox scripture for Theravada Buddhists, provides evidence that women are capable of realizing the truth of the Buddha's teachings. A woman who is on the Path to enlightenment can certainly attain monkhood. In her next life she could be a male or achieve some other exhalted state before attaining nirvana, the place of tranquility. Naturally the followers of the female meditation teachers are especially

attentive to the canon on this point. For example, one female follower of a woman meditation teacher made an extensive study of the *Therigatha*, a collection of stories about female saints and female monks found in the canon.[1] She used these stories about the female Buddhist saints quite consciously as models for female religious behavior. She drew comparisons between the life of her teacher and the lives of the saints. However, the doctrinal support for the existence of female teachers of the *dhamma* cannot begin to explain this new role in Thai Buddhism. Explanation should be sought in other social contexts where sex role differences seem to be important.

Politics

One such area is that of political action and governance in Thai society. Although politics are a worldly activity, there is an association between Buddhism and political rule. Historically, this has been apparent in the purifications of the monkhood carried out by a number of Thai kings (cf. Thwin 1979 for this practice in Burma). There is political significance to maintaining the purity of the monkhood. Briefly, Thai political structure relies on the *sangha*, or monkhood, to legitimize its authority (cf. Tambiah 1976:162 ff.; Sarkisyanz 1965:76 ff.; Mendelson 1975: 50 ff.). The monks remain outside political infighting except in times of crisis, yet they usually justify the ruling regime.

Another aspect of the association between Buddhism and political action is the fact that both are solely male pursuits. Kirsch vividly portrayed this when he commented upon the use of the noun classifier *?ong* in the Thai language. This term is a classifier for monks, the Buddha, religious images, and the King, who is at the pinnacle of the Buddhist and Thai political order (Kirsch 1975a:188). Classifying these under a single term underlies the evaluation of positions in the monkhood in in the government bureaucracy (called servants of the King) as higher status than other social positions. Women attain power, if at all, through economic

activities, pursuits that Thai males have often left to women and other ethnic groups (see Kirsch, Chapter Two of this volume).

These cultural factors can make male activity in non-governmental, but potentially political arenas, suspect. Monks who can draw support from the peasantry are continually reminded of their proper otherworldly role which includes avoiding political activity. The political power of the monks is usually demonstrated at times of governmental crisis. During the student marches of 1973, some monks encouraged a cease-fire while other monks openly supported the students. In the late 1970s the King received direct support from Phra Kittiwuttho, a monk who built a college for Buddhist studies and has sought to spread Buddhism (cf. Swearer 1975).

Lay meditation groups can be politically significant also because they combine political and religious components. Naeb Mahaniranonda, for example, had one of the few extra-administrative organizations in central Thailand. It was political in the sense that it united people in different provinces and urban centers into one organization that maintained lines of authority and legitimization from the teaching center in Bangkok. It is possible that the authorities accept such groups not only because they appear to restrict themselves solely to religious activities, but also because they are led by females, making them less threatening politically.

Ideological Changes

Perhaps it is also the case that women are allowed some latitude in the religious sphere simply because Buddhism is less relevant today for the legitimization of the regime. Other ideologies such as communism, democracy, fascism, and socialism along with the concepts of progress and development have appeared at various times in recent Thai history to gain precedence over Buddhism as a major ideological force in

the political structure. Buddhism is not ideologically relevant to an elite group concerned with economic growth. Leaders of this elite would not compete with female teachers of Buddhist thought. However, groups and classes who find Buddhism crucial to their understanding and acceptance of the Thai political order may be influenced in important ways by lay meditation societies with dynamic leaderships (cf. J. Van Esterik 1977).

On the other hand, the concerned Buddhist intellectual elite who hope that Buddhism can restructure a more benevolent society may find little point in supporting meditation societies which appear to be concerned only with otherworldly goals. The development of activist Buddhism, best seen in the desire to have monks involved in community development (cf. Mulder 1973:24), is of more interest to such groups.

Thus meditation groups may be important to certain sectors of the population but with changes in the ideological foci of the Thai political elite such groups may not appear to threaten the established political authority.

This conclusion does not deny the possibility that non-elite members of Thai society are seeking Buddhist explanations of the social order. This may explain the growing importance of nuns or *mâe: chi:* at least in Bangkok. *Mâe: chi:* who meditate may gain popularity and respect. Even some villagers believe that meditating *mâe: chi:* can cure sickness. The respect for meditating *mâe: chi:* especially in Bangkok, must be related to the same social and political changes that have resulted in the appearance of female meditation teachers.

Meditation Teachers

Let me now discuss in greater detail two female meditation teachers in Bangkok. This narrative is based on material collected in 1973-1974.

Achan Naeb is the head of a large lay and monastic

groups of meditators found throughout central Thailand (acha:n is a courtesy title meaning teacher). In addition to laity, monks have studied her method and have spread her teachings. In public lectures her monk followers sit side by side with her on the dais. The lay followers recognize her as the leader and see the monks as important students of her thought. This relationship is an extraordinary reversal of the usual one between monk and lay woman. Normally the monks are superior to women. Women are doctrinally polluting in their effect on monks since any slight, even accidental, physical contact between a monk and a woman must be ritually expiated. Normally women would not presume to teach monks, especially when the subject is Buddhism.

Two meditation groups headed by females emphasize the study of "true Buddhism" and not a Buddhism based on traditional doctrinal interpretations and rituals. True Buddhism means a Buddhism based on the canon, especially on the *Abhidhamma*, the abstract third part of the Pali canon. The groups encourage the study of the scriptures and the practice of meditation based on that study. Some Buddhists criticize this "academic" approach to Buddhist meditation (cf. Kornfield 1977:295 where Naeb is specifically criticized). This approach may be necessary for a female teacher who thereby adds lustre and authority to her teachings. They use Thai translations of the Pali canon in their lectures and make such material available to their students.

Their inspiration is found in the *satipatthana* meditation method which was first promoted by Burmese monks and laity at the turn of the century. This method of meditation promises intuitive insights of the truth without the lengthy and arduous practices of monastic meditation. The latter, *samedhi*, involves a progression through a number of absorption levels or *jhana* which take a great deal of time and concentration and which give the adept various magical and bizarre powers like flying (cf. King 1974:63 on the two types of meditation). The *vipassana* or insight meditation technique had been developed by the time of the famous commentator,

Buddhaghosa, in the fifth century A.D. as an orthodox way to enlightenment. It was called then the technique of the dry visioned saints. It has been the aim of the Burmese version of this practice to extend its use to the laity (cf. King 1974; Spiro 1970; Tambiah 1976; Swearer 1975; Gombrich 1971 on the growth of lay meditation in Theravada Buddhism). Usually *vipassana* schools of meditation emphasize the method of concentration on the adept's breathing processes, the *anapanasati*, specifically on the rising and falling of the abdomen.

The teachings of the Burmese groups reached Thailand in the 1920s. The groups are still influencing meditation practices in Thailand by way of publications and direct contacts.

Achan Naeb had an upper-class upbringing. Her father was a provincial governor, one of the highest offices in the Thai bureaucracy. In her thirties she began studying meditation with a Burmese monk who resided in a Bangkok monastery. He taught a system of meditation similar to the Sunlun Sayadaw method (cf. King 1974:71 on this Burmese monk). By the late 1940s she was the head of a thriving group of meditators. For example, in 1950 her group established a meditation center in a major monastery in Suphanburi, a provincial capital some 150 kilometers from Bangkok. Such major centers attempted, in turn, to establish meditation groups in smaller cities or towns. This was the case in Suphanburi province where her teachings were spread to many parts of that province (J. Van Esterik 1977). By the middle 1970s there were about twenty major and minor centers under her auspices teaching meditation to laity and monks in central Thailand. The heads of such centers were either monks or laity although monks were preferred leaders.

Meditation groups like Naeb's were organizationally unique since normally only the *sangha* and the government had structured organizations that crossed provincial borders. Since the student rebellion of 1973, both labor and peasant-based organizations have been growing. In more recent years right wing organizations like the

Red Gaur and the Village Scouts have mobilized action with political implications throughout the country. Meditation groups are not overtly political but they do transmit ideas and create changes in village belief systems and social structures (cf. J. Van Esterik 1977).

Naeb's headquarters is at the famous Golden Mount monastery (*Wat Saket*) in Bangkok. Her group occupies one large building in the monastery groups called the Buddhist Studies Research Centre, under royal patronage. Members of Naeb's group come there to listen to lectures, study, and take their meals with their teacher. Naeb gave many of the lectures on meditation and Abhidhammic thought herself. These were tape-recorded for future listening, publications, and transmission over the radio. She also lectured at the famous *Phra Chetuphon* monastery (known as *Wat Po*) in the halls housing the Adhidhamma Foundation. This institution also had many of her books available for sale. Lectures here and at the *Mahadhatu* monastery (*Wat Mahathat*) were recorded for radio. Naeb and her most famous monk follower, Achan Bhumi, were well-known radio lecturers.

Naeb's followers are a cross section of the educated elite, middle and upper-level bureaucrats, and business people of Bangkok, male and female. They include teachers, government employees, and military officers. One of her most loyal supporters is a brigadier-general in the army. Much the same pattern of membership occurs with the meditation groups in the provinces. Members are the elite in their communities: the teachers, minor bureaucrats, traders, shopkeepers, and large landowners.

Another woman meditation teacher is a former student of Naeb, Achan Suchin. She lectured at two major Bangkok monasteries and her tape-recorded teachings were broadcast over the radio twice a day through the auspices of the Abhidhammic Foundation (cf. Heinze 1974:158). She is also the daughter of a high level bureaucrat. She was once Naeb's heir apparent. However, once when following Naeb's rigorous meditation technique she became so weakened that she had to recover in a hospital (personal communication Donald Swearer). She subsequently

decided that isolated meditation retreats were unnecessary and a bar to mindfulness. Now she teaches that one can build mindfulness (*satipatthana*) in the course of one's daily life. She too has monastic, military, and bureaucratic supporters.

Analysis

Both of these teachers have built their followings on a strategy of able teaching and sophisticated interpretation. They both have a prodigious knowledge of the canon, particularly the *Abhidhamma*, which impresses their followers, monks and laity alike. Their supporters respect these women for their intellectual abilities displayed in their interpretation of the *dhamma* for people who are generally well educated. Also, Thai monks have never been deeply involved in studying or teaching from the Abhidhamma (Ishii 1972). Thus lay teachers do not normally intrude on monastic instructional material.

Furthermore, the monkhood has not in general kept up an intellectual and pedagogical excellence commensurate with advances in the education of the elite bureaucratic and professional classes of Bangkok. It seems that the reforms in the monastic liturgy established by the beginning of this century have lost their effectiveness in urban Thailand. At that time, there were efforts to have the monkhood preach directly in the vernacular to the laity (Wells 1960:13). This reform was weakened by the lack of change in the monastic techniques of learning by rote memorization. These techniques are useful when a great number of young men must learn the chants in order to participate as monks in monastery rituals for four to five months, but they may adversely affect preaching. Usually preaching involves the reading of material printed by the religious authorities in Bangkok. Preaching then often is merely a mimic of the memorized chanting of the Pali verses found in most rituals. The strength of the monkhood in the rural areas depends on maintaining monastic membership and continuing the ritual activities by training and absorbing many laymen. But such practices may weaken its relevance in a modern, urban society.

People used to rational explanations in daily life and faced with the stresses of urban living, may seek more in their religious life than rituals, chanting, and repetitive preachings (cf. Mulder 1973:12).

The urban upper classes commonly criticize the monkhood's reliance on ritual. For example, one of Naeb's followers complained that the monks still burn ancient texts of the Pali canon in order to make magical medicine. He pointed out that his teacher has sought to bring the knowledge of those texts to the people. The follower preferred the woman teacher to the monk because she was able to make Buddhism relevant to his life in a changing and modern social context.

The problem of communication between the urban elite and the monkhood is resolved by the development of lay meditation groups. Such groups make connections between lay Buddhists and their religious tradition. The communication gap between the monks and the sophisticated, educated laity is dealt with by establishing a Buddhist organization outside of the *sangha* which can also guarantee salvation. The route to salvation that involves making merit by giving to the monkhood is of less interest to the educated, upper classes. The evidence seems to show that upper classes generally participate less in acts of merit making than other classes in both urban and rural contexts (Bunnak 1973:27; J. Van Esterik 1977:36).

There has always been a tension between the orthodox religious goals, which emphasize the monk's seeking of nirvana, and the individual layperson's seeking of salvation. The growth of the practice of meditation and the individual seeking of *nirvana* often appear in Theravada Buddhist history when the orthodox reliance on the monkhood for salvation weakens. Meditation in the Theravadin tradition is also one of the few areas where interpretations may vary. Discussions with Thai monks and laity about meditation always centered on the idea that there are many teachers and many views of the meditation practice. The meditation experience was always seen as distinctly private. On the other hand the purity of the monkhood is maintained by a

strict orthodoxy and is distinctly public.

Monks keep their social support by carefully following the rules of the order, most of which were established by the Buddha. Even meditation by monks was under some restraint in the recent past in Thailand. Tambiah has reported on the difficulties in the 1950s surrounding a monastic effort to encourage meditation training for the laity. The monks promoting the movement were perceived by factions in the *sangha* and the government to be pursuing political goals (Tambiah 1976: 260). Obviously, a female teacher, who above all cannot be a monk, could establish a meditation society without being accused of political ambitions.

The doctrinal tolerance toward female teachers should be stressed also. Naeb is thought by many of her followers to be well on the way to *nirvana*. They believe she is a *sotapanna*, a being who will be reborn only seven more times before achieving *nirvana*. In one of those seven lives she would probably be monk, god, or king. A Thai woman scholar commented that these teachers probably do not think of themselves primarily as women. Neither women had husbands or families. They eschewed the normal roles of Thai women. They lived like the women in white, *mâe: chi:*, although they rejected this role because the generally low status of the *mae chi* would have limited their ability to lead lay groups. Thus the doctrine provides followers of these women with a rationalization for their respective roles. Women teachers like these, with their knowledge and meditation experience, are beyond worldly categories--beyond male or female categorization.

Doctrine is only a contributing factor to the phenomenon of women teachers of the *dhamma*. More important are the changes which make it possible to accept the doctrinal interpretations. The *sangha* is facing a change in its relationship to Thai society, a change which has concerned members of the monkhood and Thai society for many years (cf. Sathien 1970). The pursuit of the teaching of meditation and the

study of the *Abhidhamma* presents structural problems for the *sangha* and for a government which however secular, seeks control over religious matters. At least two enterprising Thai women have discovered the unique possibilities in the formation of meditation societies which combine leadership and intellectual abilities with a serious and profound seeking for salvation.

NOTES

1. For a comparison of the Therigāthā and Theragāthā, see Kathryn March's paper (1980). Note that females can no longer be ordained as monks in the Theravada tradition. Female religious roles, past and present, are discussed in the following paper.

Chapter Four

LAYWOMEN IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

Penny Van Esterik

Introduction

Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religious tradition in mainland Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. Both in doctrine and practice, Buddhist women appear to be inferior in spiritual worth compared with men. Since women cannot be ordained as monks, the source of greatest merit, they might expect to be treated as second-class or inferior beings in the religious domain, as has happened in other religious traditions. On the other hand, Buddhism has also been seen as a liberalizing force with its stress on conversion as evidence of spiritual worth rather than ascribed status. The position of women in Buddhism presents a paradox which raises a series of questions. First, are women devalued in Buddhist ideology? Second, if they are, has this definition hampered women in other domains? If Buddhist women exemplify a group in which elements of cultural ideology explicitly devaluing women have not constrained the activities of women themselves, this group should be of particular interest both to anthropology and women's studies.

After describing the religious roles of recluse and householder in Theravada Buddhism, I will introduce three

rural Thai women. Looking at the specifics of their lives, we see a picture of great heterogeneity, for their activities and beliefs vary widely. Yet there is an order underlying the apparent diversity. Examining this order in the latter part of the paper provides an opportunity to explain the role of laywomen in Theravada Buddhism in more detail.

Householder and Recluse

In Theravada Buddhism, both monks residing in monasteries and laity offering active support to these monasteries are necessary for the continuity of the religious tradition. The distinction between householder and recluse is modeled after the biography of Buddha, when, at his birth, he is recognized as a great man. The Brahmans reveal that . . . "if a man possessing such marks and characteristics continue in the household life, he becomes a Universal monarch: if he retires from the world, he becomes a Buddha" (Cowell 1895:52). The biography provides a paradigm contrasting the householder rooted in this world, and the recluse who has detached himself from this world.

The monk or *bhikku* is one who is without possessions and lives on alms. In the Theravada tradition, monks live in village monasteries in settled communities, or in forest retreats. A young man may be ordained as a monk in his twentieth year if he meets the conditions for ordination. Ideally, all Buddhist men should be ordained as monks at some time during their lives. While some men remain monks for life, others may be ordained for a brief period of time. Generally, monks are expected to offer ritual and spiritual services to the laity, while giving the laity an opportunity to make merit by offering them material support.

Women have not always been prohibited from taking the path of the ordained recluse. At the request of his disciple, Ananda, and his devout kinswomen, the Buddha permitted the formation of an order of Buddhist nuns or *bhikkuni*. The decision to ordain women was evidently made reluctantly, and weighty regulations were

imposed on the women who chose the homeless life. Even the newest *bhikku* novice was worthy of more respect than the most senior *bhikkuni*. The following passage expresses the attitude attributed to the Buddha concerning women who chose to become recluses:

> If, Ananda, women had not retired from household life to the houseless one, under the Doctrine and Discipline announced by The Tathagata, religion, Ananda, would long endure; a thousand years would the Good Doctrine abide. But since, Ananda, women have now retired from household life to the houseless one, under the Doctrine and Discipline announced by The Tathagata, not long, Ananda, will religion endure; but five hundred years, Ananda, will the Good Doctrine abide. Just as, Ananda, those families which consist of many women and few men are easily overcome by burglars, in exactly the same way, Ananda, when women retire from household life to the houseless one, under a doctrine and discipline, that religion does not long endure (Warren 1969: 445).

Bhikkuni existed in Sri Lanka and India, but there are no records that suggest that an ordination tradition for women was ever established in Southeast Asia. Where ordination traditions for women were established, they did not last long nor were they worthy of much respect.

There have been no popular movements pressing for the ordination of women in the Theravada tradition, although there has been mention of asking a Mahayana women's order to help re-establish an ordination tradition for women in Thailand (Heintz 1976:214). A second anecdote appears more reflective of the present attitude toward the ordination tradition for women. Ferguson mentions hearing a report of a Burmese monk who proposed admitting women into the order of monks and was "practically run out of Burma by angry Buddhists" (Ferguson n.d.:9).

The *Pali* terms *upasaka* and *upasika* label the categories of Buddhist layman and laywoman. Literally, the term means "sitting close by," a lay adherent to Buddhism, and refers to anyone who takes refuge in the Buddha, the *dhamma* or teachings, and the *sangha* or monastic order, and who observes the five precepts (to refrain from killing, stealing, improper sexual activity, lying, and consuming alcoholic beverages). Further, the devotees should not engage in the wrong ways of livelihood: trading in arms, in living beings, meat, alcohol, or poison (Nyanatiloka 1968:86). Since in rural Thai communities, there is no formal joining a temple community, no acceptance of specific rights and duties associated with the identity of lay devotee, most rural Thais could claim to be *upasaka* or *upasika*. In casual conversation, the terms are used most commonly to refer to those people making merit together by attending to a single service. While they are in the preaching hall they may refer to each other as *upasaka, upasika*. But the term is also used in a more corporate sense to refer to those men and women, usually elderly, who voluntarily choose to observe an additional three precepts. The observance of these extra vows, which are kept for one day and one night, are most easily accomplished by remaining together overnight. The old men and women who participate in this ritual conduct a service similar to the service used by the monks (cf. Wells 1960:46). At that time, they chant a prayer asking to be reborn when the future Buddha, *Ariya Metteyya*, is on earth (cf. J. Van Esterik 1977:104).

As many ethnographers have noted, in rural Thai communities women generally outnumber men in attendance at weekly temple services and sermons, in presenting food to the monks, and in observing the precepts (cf. Kirsch 1975a:184; Tambiah 1976:308; Terweil 1975:210). In fact, the monastic order survives and flourishes due to the devotion of laywomen who provide both food and sons to guarantee the continuity of the monastic order.

Laywomen may choose to intensify their devotional activities by becoming *mâe: chi:* or "women in white." These women are often erroneously referred to as Buddhist

nuns. They bear little resemblance to the ordained *bhikkuni* who wore the saffron robes of a monk. They are laywomen, most commonly old and poor, who shave their heads, wear white robes, and usually live in or close to monasteries. *Mâe: chi:* follow a lifestyle similar to monks in their daily activities. That is, they make merit, meditate, study, fast, and attempt to reduce their attachment to worldly concerns. These women in white are not suitable fields of merit for the laity. That is, unlike the merit accrued from well-intentioned giving to monks, villagers would receive little merit for providing *mâe: chi:* with food and the necessities of life. Instead, *mâe: chi:* support themselves financially or depend on their relatives for assistance. While other devout laymen and laywomen might observe the eight precepts for the period of one day and one night, *mâe: chi:* strive to observe the eight precepts continuously. The *mâe: chi:* provide important contrasts with the laywomen who remain with their families.

The Village Setting

The three women I will discuss all reside in Crocodile Village, a large, prosperous, and relatively progressive village in Uthong district, Suphanburi province, west central Thailand. The village, composed of three hamlets, contains over five thousand people distributed in about one thousand households. Occupied since the 1600s, the villagers report that the Mon of lower Burma were the original inhabitants of the area, but evidence for Mon antecedents in the area are minimal.

Today, the hamlets straddle major highways linking Uthong to the provincial capital of Suphanburi, to Kanchanaburi to the west, to Nakhon Prathom to the south, and ultimately to Bangkok, 120 kilometers and a harrowing three-hour bus ride from the village. With a substantial school offering seven primary grades, a local market, and a newly reconstructed temple complex, the villagers have good reason to be proud of their community. Electricity, which became available in 1973, reaches most homes to power lights, radios, TV sets, refrigerators, and even electric rice cookers. While substantially

a rice farming community, there is a wide diversity of subsistence styles including cattle farming.

Just as it is impossible to identify a typical Thai village, so it is impossible to introduce a "typical Thai woman." In spite of this obvious fact of ethnographic description, several Thai women have become known to us through their autobiographies and have contributed an inside view of their world (Dickenson 1963; Knight 1957; Trabutana 1958). Recently Sulamith Potter has described the lives of several northern Thai women emphasizing their place in northern Thai family structure (S. Potter 1977). In the next few pages I will explore the Buddhist identity of three rural Thai women, focusing on the way these laywomen use Buddhist ideology to interpret their life experiences.

An ethnographer is never a neutral observer, and any writing that infers neutrality is a distortion of reality. Claiming neutrality does have the function of masking the investigator's bias, and relieving him or her of the responsibility of making explicit the experiences which have colored the observations. I was not, nor am I now a neutral observer of these women. My relationship to them can be inferred somewhat from my use of kin terms. At the beginning of each personal sketch, I will acknowledge my personal relationship with them during the time I resided in their community (1971, 1974).

Na Chat

I addressed Chat, who is about 55 years old, as aunt or *na*. We rented her house in the village and she almost adopted my family. She made our lives alternatively pleasant and uncomfortable by constantly prodding and twisting our lifestyle into one acceptable and appropriate for a foreigner in a Thai village. There were no other foreigners in the province, and few villagers had enough contact with foreigners to form any accurate estimation of how they should behave. Nevertheless, Na Chat established standards of behavior for

our dressing, eating, working, and socializing. Through her kinship network, we made most of our initial contacts in the village. I relied on her, trusted her, and liked her, even when I suspected that she may have been laughing at the foreigners, and even feathering her nest at the expense of my food budget.

She is very much rooted in this world, with six sons, five daughters, and a garrulous ex-gangster for a husband. Her husband comes from a prosperous and important family. As a youth he was viewed not as a criminal but as a community protector and leader as he led raids against nearby villages.

Na Chat can be raucous and crude, but her total world is explained and made meaningful by Buddhism. Hers is a highly traditional village-oriented cosmology, peopled with ghosts, guardian spirits, and divinities who can be controlled through ritual. Na Chat's knowledge of Buddhism is the practical knowledge of a householder who must solve immediate problems of security in this world. Her concerns are typical of laywomen as reflected in the Buddhist canon--the benefits of food offerings, the rewards of observing fast days, sexual and health concerns of faithful wives and mothers. The merit making activities she performs demonstrate her success at solving these problems and guarantee her the respect of the community.

Na Chat's six sons will supply her with the greatest amount of merit that a women can receive when they ordain as Buddhist monks. If she ordains even five sons, she believes that she will not be born in a plane lower than the human realm. No sufferings for her in the various hells so grotesquely depicted on the walls of the preaching hall. A woman making less merit in her previous lives gives birth to girls in this life, a point she delights in reminding her sister-in-law, Phi Daeng, a wealthy "modern" woman, but the mother of three girls. She appears satisfied with her female gender, and argues that those who desire rebirth as a

male or female in the next life, will be born of indeterminant sex. She hopes to be reborn as a diety in one of the sensuous heavens and expresses no interest in attaining *nirvana*.

Na Chat regularly attends temple services, although she may occasionally have to spend the day in distant fields at critical times such as planting or harvesting, instead. Her husband and children rarely attend services. In addition, during the period of more intensive religious activity often referred to as the Buddhist lenten season, Na Chat sometimes joins the older men and women who chant as a group in a building on the temple grounds every holy day. Chat claims she cannot join the group of lay devotees in observing an additional three precepts and remaining in the temple compound for a day and a night because of her responsibility to her family, but she hopes to when she is older. In her eyes, then, she intends to make this commitment in the future, but she is too rooted in earthly concerns at the present time. She is scrupulously careful to keep a white blouse and white shoulder cloth clean for attending temple services, not for reasons of vanity, but to show respect. Before each service Chat collects on a large tray the rice offerings made by the villagers and presents this tray as a "gift to the Buddha." She gives generously, both food and cash, to the temple.

Because of her knowledge of the "old ways," Chat is often called upon to assist her neighbors in times of personal crisis such as births or deaths. She is skilled in the techniques of healing and ritual protection, and many cannot afford--emotionally or financially--to experiment with the solutions offered by modern technology. She can cure dog bites, rashes, and most illnesses by a combination of herbal remedies and Buddhist stanzas, both of which are necessary. But she knows that the Buddhist stanzas she recites would be more powerful if spoken by a monk.

Na Chat delivered eleven of her thirteen babies alone with no assistance from the midwife and is sought after to assist other women in childbirth. Chat is an excellent example of a woman who nurtures children well

(*liáng dii*). Each child was breastfed until her subsequent pregnancy, and she points out that by giving of herself in nursing her children she is drawing her children to her and creating a debt that her sons will repay at ordination and that her daughters will repay by attendance at sermons and caring for her in her old age. Her youngest daughter will inherit her house in return for remaining with and caring for her parents after the other children have married. Her concern with maximizing the household's financial status demonstrates her careful concern for the welfare of her eleven living children who will inherit from her. She is setting aside land and cattle for her daughters, and searching out from among the young village women those who would make suitable daughters-in-law. Her daughters are kept under strict supervision while their brothers are making up for the few months of celibacy they will endure in the temple.

Chat also knows the verses and the ritual actions necessary for establishing guardian spirit houses, although she would never perform these Brahmanic rituals if there were a male ritual specialist available. She is, however, a repository of Brahmanic knowledge that can be passed on to her sons. She knows how ancestors should be treated, how topknots should be removed, how houses should be built, and how ghosts can be kept away. She performs the important invocation to the rice goddess on her own land and on the lands of her kinsmen. Her daughter now assists her and is learning the words. She trusts amulets to protect her and relies on local fortune tellers to advise her of auspicious times for undertaking family rituals and other ventures.

By village standards, Chat is quite prosperous. She farms about twenty-seven *râi* (1 *rai* = .4 acre) of rice land and thirty-eight *râi* of cash crops, and owns over two hundred head of cattle in addition to raising pigs and chickens. Further, she owns and registers land in her own right as well as jointly with her husband. Chat's control of the family finances is quite obvious and she regularly discusses critical price

fluctuations with other farmers. Her agricultural labor is equal to or greater than her husband's, and she drives her daughters equally hard. Like most Southeast Asian women, she handles all the household marketing and holds the money from the crops, stating frankly that if her husband had the money he would spend it on drinking and gambling.

Na Chat is respectful to all monks and novices, but like many laywomen, she delights in recounting the failure of "individuals in yellow robes" who committed offences and were stripped of their membership in the monastic order. For she wants to insure that the monks keep the precepts and remain pure so that they may continue to be a suitable field of merit for the laity. She is skeptical of the few village meditators and the more sophisticated, educated villagers who listen to religious broadcasts on the radio, expressing doubt that they really understand what they hear. Since village meditators often claim to have seen spirits, fear of spirits alone would keep her from attempting to meditate. As the organizing force behind her family's means of production, she has little time for what she considers "luxuries" such as meditation.

Na Chat exhibits great self-control in her efforts to give a good start to her children. Hardheaded, she accepts life with equanamity and little show of emotion. Resourceful and flexible, she quickly adapted to the needs of two foreigners and fitted their needs with hers to the mutual satisfaction of both, give or take a little. She keeps the precepts when she can and is guided by the rule, "do good, receive good: do evil, receive evil," which she follows whenever it does not interfere extensively with her family's welfare.

Boon

I addressed Boon by her name only, using no kin term since she was only eighteen when I knew her in 1974. Superficially, we were on close terms characterized by a cloying sweetness. Yet in spite of the fact that we had many interests in common, I found her

harder to interview than many other young women. At times her pious posturing gave me the feeling that I was not seeing a "real" person and that her words and actions were contrived and artificial. An attractive teenager, Boon did not appear to have much in common with other girls her age in the village. When I first met her, she had recently left a monastery where she spent three years as a "women in white" or *mâe: chi:* and had returned to village life.

"Women in white" or *mâe: chi:* in Thailand are generally elderly, poor, and without kin to care for them. A few young women like Boon join because they appeared to be difficult to handle or sickly as children. Young women may join for short periods of time to fulfill a vow made by their parents. Boon's history illustrates the entry and exit of a young woman into the community of "women in white."

Boon was very sick and indulged as a child, and her family shaved her head, leaving three tufts of hair to grow into topknots. The ritual removal of these topknots before puberty failed to improve Boon's health. Shortly thereafter, she and her family were impressed with an older woman in their village who had learned meditation techniques. This woman became a *mâe: chi:* and still resides in Wat Paknam, a famous meditation temple in Bangkok. Wat Paknam is a large and well-known center for meditation and Buddhist thought. The abbot, who died in 1959, developed and popularized meditation techniques and sent teachers into rural areas, including Uthong district. This large center supports a large community of *mâe: chi:* who reside in a separate section of the temple grounds.

At the age of 14 Boon joined the village women there in a last effort to cure her illnesses. As soon as she joined and was given a new name, she was cured and required no more medicine. She kept the eight precepts every day and practiced meditation under the watchful eye of her village mentor. There she gained expertise in chanting and some degree of religious training. She

remained at Wat Paknam only three years and gave no indication why she left that vocation. Back in her comfortable family compound, she still dressed in white and spoke piously and modestly about religion, saving her girlish enthusiasm for attendance at the temple services and making merit with the old folk.

Boon holds interesting views which combine sophisticated liturgical and philosophical knowledge with the more widespread village concepts. Like most lay persons, she argues that if you want to learn anything about Buddhism, you must ask the monks. She expresses the goal of reaching *nirvana*, a goal shared by few villagers who find total extinction and nothingness less appealing than a sojourn as an angel in one of the heavens of the sensuous world. Yet Boon describes *nirvana* as simply a more comfortable heaven where there are no problems and no suffering. Note that Spiro finds in Burma that even among males who say that they desire *nirvana* in their next existence, their goals suggest that they conceive of it as a "superparadise" (Spiro 1970:80-82).

Boon makes merit regularly and piously, unlike her peers who, if they do appear at the temple, come attired in their seductive best and appear to have their minds on more worldly affairs. For example, at a service marking the end of the lenten retreat in November, the teenage women I sat with discussed the young monks who would soon be leaving the temple, "ripe" for sexual activity and eventual marriage. Young women seldom go to the temple for weekly services but appear for more important celebrations. For this reason, Boon seemed out of place with the older men and women who attended regularly. Sitting with Boon during a sermon, she would mutter about the other young women's elaborate hairstyles and suggest ungenerously that they were only making merit for show and did not have good intentions about giving. In the temple compound, Boon advised me to sit and behave "as if we were *thewada:*" (angels), so that we would be models for heavenly observers who might be attracted by Buddhist piety. Her decision to keep the eight precepts with the old people stems from her

belief that, since one can never know one's merit store, it is necessary to accumulate as much merit as possible. Her merit making activities include special prayers and offerings to insure that she will be reborn when the future Buddha, *Ariya Metteyya*, appears in this world. At such a time, there will be perfection on earth with plentiful food and beautiful people identical in appearance. When Boon meditates, she reports that she can see this state of perfection in her present life.

It is her meditation practice which separates Boon from other young women in the village. She expects that she will reap the fruits of this meritorious activity in this life. Also in this life, Boon identifies meditation discipline as the source of her composure and self-control. In this cool detached non-grasping approach to life, Boon exemplifies a Buddhist ideal. And in her disinterest in boyfriends, marriage, or any form of sexual contact, Boon is atypical of the young village women.

Boon wears Buddhist amulets and believes they will protect a believer who makes merit. But, she argues, if a person is to die in a car accident, amulets will not prevent this from happening. Further, she argues that accident victims should be taken to the hospital and treated, since it is impossible to know a person's merit store. Boon enjoys this style of argumentation which reflects her participation in such discussions while she was resident at Wat Paknam.

Because Boon accepts monks as the source of all knowledge about Buddhism, she expresses the desire to be reborn as a male in order to become a monk, but as with many sophisticated Buddhist women, she is nonchalant about verbalizing such a desire, knowing full well that she should not be striving for any particular rebirth state.

Boon is criticized by other young women in the village for sitting around with old people. Further, her lack of interest in men and her disinterest in bearing children make her suspect. To other young

villagers, her meditation exercises were evidence, not of piety, but of laziness, and they criticized her for not supporting her family economically.

At last word, Boon had left the village, finding it incompatible with either her spiritual goals or her eccentric personality. She sews in a dress shop directly behind Wat Paknam where she once resided. She is no longer a *mae chi*, but in her free time she wears white and practices meditation. Partly of this world, partly finished with this world, she is unwilling or unable to commit herself totally to either lifestyle.

Phi Daeng

Much to my regret now, my relation with Phi Daeng (*phi* = older) was not comfortable. She wanted me to treat her as an older sister, but I could not do so. As our closest neighbor residing a mere six feet away from our home, her strident voice floated even into the mosquito-netted privacy of our sleeping area. And what she had to say was not pleasant to my ears: I did not chat with her enough; I was stingy with my food money and salaries; I dressed like a peasant; I did not understand Thai ways; I associated with poor villagers of dubious moral integrity; and the list went on. My husband had much greater rapport with her family the following year when I was not resident with him and only a visitor.

Phi Daeng, about 40 years old, is Chat's sister-in-law. The youngest daughter of a wealthy family, she inherited property, a substantial house to which she has added many modern features, and a network of clients who look to her and her husband as patrons. In Crocodile Village, patrons would lend money or rice to an entourage of clients who could be counted on to provide their patrons with labor and loyal support in return. Wealthier villagers acting as patrons can provide their clients with extra-village contacts and help them understand government regulations (J. Van Esterik 1977: 164-65). As Chat often reminded her, Phi Daeng has

produced no sons and has to sponsor the ordination of other young men to accumulate the merit from the activity. Recently, she helped sponsor the ordination of one of Chat's sons. Her three daughters are all in school, the oldest travelling to the provincial center, and she intends to educate them all as well as possible.

Unlike Na Chat and Boon, Phi Daeng often wore polyester ski pants and other western items of clothing popular in Bangkok, proud of the fact that she could afford their outrageous cost (and endure their stifling discomfort) compared to cotton sarongs. She is domestically oriented and has no interest or need to work in the fields. After completing four primary grades in the village, she ended her formal education. As an adult she studied for a certificate in sewing and has the justifiable reputation of being a fine cook. She sews for herself and her children on occasion but is by no means a seamstress for hire in spite of the fact that she owns her own sewing machine.

Her husband, who returned from a job in Bangkok to marry Phi Daeng, is one of the few villagers with a salaried job outside the village. He works as an insurance salesman in the provincial capital, Suphanburi, returning home in the evening in the black slacks and white shirt of the "white collar worker." This extra-village contact defines many aspects of their lifestyle. Unlike Chat, whose actions are interpreted by reference to a traditional village model, Phi Daeng has the sophisticated, modern views appropriate for a woman who is aware of a world beyond the village; but her personality reflects, in my opinion, the frustration she must feel at being restricted to acting in the village arena. Although the family owns a television set, refrigerator, electric rice cooker, motorcycle, chairs and tables, they are immersed in village patron-client networks and must behave in accordance with village standards.

The family has several sources of income beyond the $110 per month salary of Phi Daeng's husband. They rent out 39 *râi* of rice fields and 25 *râi* of cash crops, which provides them with rice and produce for the

household and cash. In addition, they have about 55 head of cattle which one of Chat's son tends.

Phi Daeng places little trust in the efficacy of ritual action and derides such traditional Brahmanic rituals as shaving the "fire-hair" of a newborn baby, or tonsure ceremonies. She was one of several villagers who denied that children wore topknots anymore, even as children with topknots played under her house. She says that she does not believe in spirits or propitiate them in any way. However, her family visits a Mon guardian spirit in another town every year. In addition, she freqents famous fortune tellers to obtain advice on financial investments, personal problems, and her children's upcoming exams.

Phi Daeng attends the temple services on days of ritual importance, but not as regularly as Chat, for example. Her mother, who died recently, kept the eight precepts and participated in the chanting with the old people, as Chat did occasionally. But for *Phi* Daeng such ritual activities are not the only available means for her to make merit. In fact, her participation in communal merit-making activities appears almost to be forced on her by her clients, who use these occasions to pay their respects and curry favor with their patrons. On such occasions, she wears a good proportion of the family wealth in gold jewelry.

Phi Daeng and her family can make merit by contributing generously to religious causes, and they probably distribute money for religious functions more widely than most villagers. They support the school and a nearby meditation center financially, and are involved in any enterprise that the villagers would evaluate as modern or progressive. Such activities are acceptable means of improving one's power and status in this life and may provide valuable personal contacts. As other anthropologists have found, the wealthier families give proportionately less of their income to merit-making activities, although in absolute terms they give more (J. Van Esterik 1977:36; Kaufman 1960:105). This discrepancy is reflected in a common village sentiment that the wealthy, including Phi Daeng give without proper intention or give only for appearances.

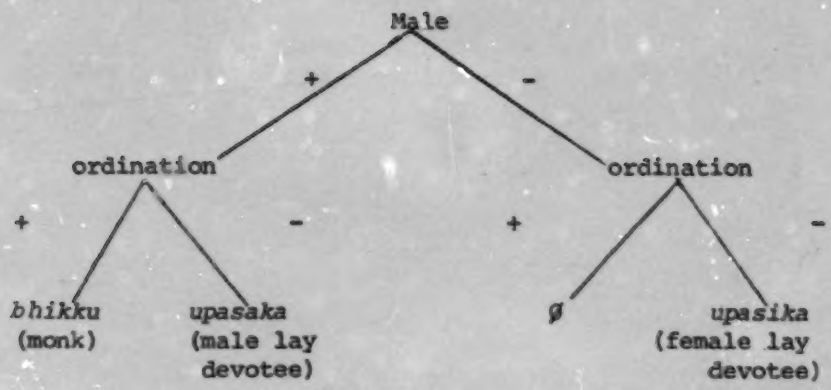
The family could leave the village and have the conveniences of town or city living. By doing so, of course, they would take on insignificant roles on a grand stage, and lose the advantages of being stars in a minor play. Although they have the financial resources to leave the village and the beliefs that would allow them to fit in with modern Thai Buddhists, they remain among the village elite, tied to a system of patron-client reciprocity that appears to be more distasteful to them than to their parents.

Interpretation

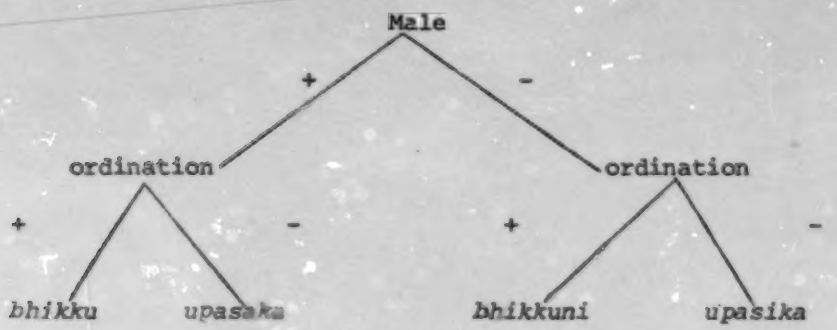
How can the particulars of these three Thai women's lives help answer the questions posed at the beginning of this paper? All three women utilize Buddhist ideology to make sense of their very different lives. Clearly, Buddhism is not irrelevant to them.

Based on these sketches, we can suggest that Na Chat and Phi Daeng are in no way hampered by evaluation of their lifestyles in terms of Buddhism. But Boon is. That is, in Thai society Buddhism comprises a reference system for evaluating the lives of these women. As I will argue below, Boon's striving after a monastic role which does not exist forces her into an anomolous position. But Na Chat and Phi Daeng, although they differ in their use of Buddhist ideology, are not hampered by this ideology because Buddhism does not devalue their role in relation to their male counterparts. Both women occupy a clearly defined and respectable slot in the Buddhist vision of an ideal community. As laywomen, they fulfill the duties of a householder very well.

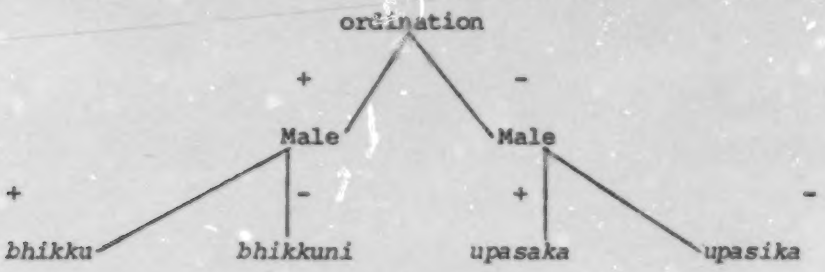
To explain why this should be so, let us examine the social identities defined by Buddhism is this community. Age, sex, and ordination status are all possible dimensions of contrast. In the following diagrams, the social identities are represented formally in terms of the presence (+) or absence (-) of two dimensions, masculinity and ordination. Contrasting male and female, we generate three Buddhist identities:



But in the few centuries after the birth of the Buddha, one other identity for women existed:



However, it is also possible to contrast ordained and not ordained to generate the same terms:



The identity of *Bhikkuni* is no longer available to Buddhist women.

The first ordering emphasizes sex differentiation, with the dimension of ordination of secondary importance. The second ordering emphasizes the contrast between ordained and not ordained, with differentiation by sex of secondary importance. Both orderings take us somewhere, but neither in isolation. Nevertheless, I argue that the second ordering, following closely the model of the Buddha's biography, fits more closely to the Buddhist ideal. In a discussion of women and power in Theravada Buddhism, this is the most critical dimension, and it emphasizes that women are cut off from the most valued vocation, that of monk. With the demise of the order of *bhikkuni* in the early centuries A.D., women had no access to this position. The critical point here is that women per se are not devalued: non-ordination is devalued.

The distinction between ordained and not ordained is emphasized in many ways, including the acceptance of Buddhist rules of conduct. While the monks promise to keep 1[illegible] precepts and 227 rules of monastic conduct, those not ordained may ask to receive and vow to keep five precepts, or undertake to observe three additional rules for a period of one day and one night. In addition, those who are ordained belong to a higher moral realm and are classified as "*?ong*" in conversation, while ordinary people are classified as "*khon*." The two categories are further distinguished by the power emanating from the recitation of Buddhist stanzas. Chants by monks are deemed much more powerful than the same chants done by lay persons, male or female.

Those ordained constitute a field of merit for those who are not ordained. It is through the opposition of these two categories that lay persons are provided with the most productive means of making merit. By providing for the needs of the ordained through food and periodic financial support, the laity have the opportunity to improve their merit store. Finally, these two categories differ in their soterological goals. The ordinands, less worldly and less attached to this world, are ideally pursuing the goal of increasing detachment and ultimate extinction. Those not ordained pursue more worldly goals, becoming more attached to

this world as they progress through the householder's career. In old age, they become less attached, and gradually disengage themselves from worldly concerns. In this way, then, monks and laity do not differ in a simple quantitative manner, but turn in opposite directions.

On the other hand, laymen and laywomen are not greatly differentiated in Theravada Buddhism. Both men and women can ask the monks to recite the precepts, both may serve on the community temple committee, and both may make merit by serving the monks. The distinction between male and female appears to be less and less important as men and women age and decrease their involvement in sexual activities.

The importance of the distinction between ordained and not ordained helps to explain why *mâe chi* are not universally admired as fulfilling the ideals of Buddhist laywomen. While individual *mâe chi* may be admired for their good acts or meditation skills, as a category they are not particularly admired or respected. Indeed, they are often the subject of jokes, and may be feared or despised. These women in white have the potential for negative evaluation, since their identity is at best ambiguous and often contradictory. Even though *mâe chi* live lives more reflective of Buddhist values and intensify their religious commitment, they are not held up as models of ideal female behavior. By their labor and attachment to this world, householders like Na Chat and Phi Daeng are admired for having guaranteed the prosperity and continuity of the monastic order. Women such as Boon have fueled no feminist fires in Theravada communities. On the contrary, *mâe chi* may be viewed as failures, outcasts, or eccentrics. Boon, for example, is viewed as a selfish young woman, unwilling to accept the responsibilities and power attendant on being female, yet unable to be ordained.

To explain the devaluation of the women in white, let us consider that these women are anomalous in that they violate society's sense of order (Douglas 1966).

Anything which detracts from the clear contrast between valued, opposed categories--in this case, between ordained and not ordained--is likely to be evaluated negatively and judged as anomalous. *Mâe chi* do not present a complete contrast with either monks or other laywomen. Such cases of incomplete contrast have been viewed by Leach (1976) and Douglas (1966) as anomalous. *Mâe chi* are not members of a bounded category, but are continuous with the category labelled *upasika*. Yet, we cannot view *mae chi* as representing a legitimate intermediate category, for *mâe chi* do not mediate between states.

To defend this argument, we might note the use of white in other contexts to mark a transitional category. Na Chat always wears a white blouse and scarf to temple services, as she marks her temporary intensification of Buddhist activity. Similarly, a young man about to be ordained wears white robes before donning the yellow robes of a novice or monk. Men leaving the monastic order after many years may become special laymen wearing white robes and possessing some powers derived from their sojourn as monks. But *mae chi* wear white robes continuously, as if they are permanently between states, yet neither past nor future state is clearly defined. *Mâe chi* are not on their way to becoming anything else.

Mâe chi seldom give up anything when they take on their identity. For these women are commonly old and poor, or occasionally young and sick. Old *mâe chi* in particular follow a temporal sequence which parallels the Indian *asrama*, or ideal stages of life for an Aryan male. That is, they become recluses only after they have completed the duties of a householder (Basham 1974:158). The fact that most Buddhist monks become recluses at the time they could begin the life of a married householder, emphasizes how much men give up to become monks. Thus, men and women differ in the temporal sequence and intensity of their involvement with Buddhism. Women have a more constant concern with Buddhism throughout their lives, intensified in old age, compared to the more fluctuating involvement of men who undergo a drastic identity change during their period as monks but are less involved as young men.

Young ascetic females, such as Boon, reverse the normal temporal sequence associated with women, since they choose an ascetic life before becoming married householders. Boon, in the eyes of her community, is doing the wrong thing at the wrong time.

The existence of "women in white" challenges the assumption that women are less controlled than men. By acting like monks, *mâe chi* demonstrate their ability to control themselves in spite of the fact that they have few actual restrictions on their behavior. Part of this control surrounds sexuality, for *mâe chi* are celibate by choice, a condition which contradicts the prevailing image of female sexuality. In general terms, women are viewed as "oversexed," and actively seeking sexual satisfaction, even to the point of tempting or seducing monks. The fact that *mâe chi* reside by or near temples may arouse suspicion in the eyes of the laity. Attagara (1968:317) recorded a story of a woman who dresses up as a *mâe chi* and seduces a local abbot who is so ashamed of his weakness that he holds his breath and dies. From a Jataka tale comes the telling line, "Women desire rich lovers like cows seeking new pastures" (Law 1927:50). Yet, Boon states flatly that she wants no boyfriends or husband in the future. Like the women meditation teachers of Bangkok (cf. J. Van Esterik, Chapter three this volume), these celibate women hardly conform to an image of lusty women. If women are more sexually active than men, young *mâe chi* give up or renounce more than males do when they become celibate. An old woman who has ceased sexual activity and has no interest in men gives up very little to become a *mâe chi*, but a young woman like Boon renounces a great deal.

Mâe chi are devalued precisely because they blur the distinction between ordained and not ordained. They behave like monks but they are not ordained. They follow no set of rules or restrictions which would cut them off from the laity and guarantee their worthiness. There is no ritual means to distinguish them from other lay devotees.

The devaluation of *mâe chi* suggests that the contrast between male and female ordained and not ordained

is not resolvable simply by saying that females are inferior to males, for women who behave like males do not increase in spiritual status in their own eyes or those of the community. But do women accept Buddhism's definition of their worth? Mi Mi Khaing, writing of Burmese women, states that "we always keep alive in us the religious feeling we are 'below' mankind," (Mi Mi Khaing 1962:71). From her words, we might argue that women are a muted group, accepting the dominant ideology even though it devalues them (cf. S. Ardener 1977).

On the other hand, the sketches of these three laywomen suggest that the most critical contrast is between ordained and not ordained and not between male and female. Although *mae chi* may present a potential challenge to assumptions about male and female identity, their presence also reminds us that what we are contrasting is asceticism and sensuality, detachment and attachment, and not male and female.

If we distinguish masculine asceticism and feminine sensuality, then we can assume that both men and women place higher value on the former. But these values refer to metaphors for releasing and generating, opposed but interdependent processes: they do not refer to Buddhist men and women.

Women are viewed as being more rooted in this world and are the center of household stability. Na Chat and Phi Daeng exemplify this aspect of the *upasika*. In contrast to monks who are less attached to this world and should be following the path of increasing detachment and ultimate extinction, all women are "tied to" the opposite process of becoming, through their reproductive capacities. As convenient symbols for fertility, women are the specialists in the "becoming"--the production and nurturance of children (Falk 1980:108). This generative capacity is qualitatively opposed to the recluse's goal of non-becoming or extinction.

While Buddhism does appear to suppress the feminine, generative qualities, Ferguson has pointed out that the

rejection of these qualities by a monk affirms their high value. He argues that the Great Goddess, the earth mother is not absent from Buddhism, and her existence is a "clear tribute to the feminine soil out of which Theravada Buddhism has so luxuriously grown over the millenia" (Ferguson n.d.:3).

The attachment that individual women feel for their children means that women do not meet the conditions for ordination as monks: that is, they are not free. But, once again, the existence of young *mâe chi* challenges this basic assumption. Young *mâe chi* may voluntarily remove themselves from their households and decide not to have children. And old *mâe chi* may choose to leave their husbands and children to seek their own salvation (cf. Kirsch 1967:164; Delaney 1978: 250).

By separating females from the feminine metaphor for attachment and "becoming," and males from the masculine metaphor for detachment and release, it is easier to see why Buddhist ideology has not hampered women in other domains of activity. Women and men alike recognize that detachment and release are Buddhist ideals. But, as the lives of these three Buddhist laywomen show, this belief does not mean that women are, in fact, inferior to men. Instead, it motivates women to support the institution where these ideals are practiced, while they go about the business of living.

Chapter Five

PUTTING MALAY WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE

Carol C. Laderman

During the course of two years of anthropological research, from 1975-77, in Merchang, a sub-district in the state of Trengganu on the east coast of peninsular Malaysia, I became aware of certain themes that permeated many areas of Malay culture. One is that of the ideal Malay woman and her proper place within the economic scheme, the political arena, marriage and divorce. Serious deviations from normative behavior can occasionally lead to a viable alternative lifestyle, or, more rarely, to enhanced prestige for women, but more often precipitate divorce, and, Malays believe, may prevent a woman from successfully delivering her baby. This paper will discuss Malay women in Islamic village society on the east coast of Malaysia, and the mechanisms by which they are kept in, or restored to, their place.[1]

Trengganu, although largely inhabited by farmers and fishermen, has settlements situated in a variety of ecological zones and boasting a range of economic circumstances. For example, in a suburb of Kuala Trengganu, the state capital, only 17 miles from my research site, many local women work cooperatively in a government sponsored mat-weaving factory (Strange 1971). This is unlike Merchang, where women work individually or as part of a domestic unit. Obviously, my data must not be used

to characterize all Malay women--urban, suburban, rural west coast and east coast--in all respects." However, I believe that my description of women in a particular parish of Trengganu can serve as the ground base in a cultural passacaglia--the repeating theme over which intricate and ever-changing variations are played.

Women's Occupations

Women's work begins early and ends late. By 6 a.m. the ring of stone mortar against pestle resounds from most houses as the women prepare breakfast. The wood-burning stove must be lit, the babies fed and bathed, and the children supervised as they prepare for the morning session of school. After the children have left, the housewife cleans the dishes with cold well water and soap, using sand to scour the pots and pans. Every day water must be drawn from the well by pulling up the bucket hand over hand for bathing, cooking, drinking, washing dishes and laundry. This is the task of the housewife, although adults and older children draw their own bath water. Drinking water, in most families, is boiled and stored in bottles. Laundry must be washed, hung out to dry, and folded every day. The floors are swept daily and occasionally scrubbed on hands and knees with soap and water and a stiff brush. The garbage is burned every day and the area around the house is kept clean. Fish, generally purchased from a man on a motor-bike, must be cleaned and gutted.

Malays eat three meals a day, but frequently the same meal is served for both lunch and supper, easing the housewife's burden. Husbands who have returned from an extended period of migratory labor are fussed over by their wives, who add to their chores by preparing favorite snacks (cf. Siegel 1969).

Frequently the housewife ends her day folding the laundry after the younger children have gone to sleep. If babies wake during the night, they are usually quieted by breast-feeding. Preparing a night bottle is not a chore for most village women as, with very few exceptions, they nurse their babies from one to as many

as four years, if there are no younger siblings. A fractious baby who needs more attention at night is the mother's responsibility, and the loss of sleep its care may entail will not excuse her from the next day's work. Women must be sick indeed before they abdicate their daily tasks.

Besides their household duties, most of the women spend part of their days working in the fields and tapping rubber. Other than rubber tapping and agricultural work, either on one's own property or as a day laborer, there are few occupations open to the village women. Out of a total of 147 women I interviewed, half did some agricultural work, 18% tapped rubber and 27% did no work outside the home. Women's wages are lower than men's. A day's agricultural work pays a man M$5.00, while a woman will receive M$3.50. Three women in my four village survey were traditional midwives, but in two cases they combined this work with farming, and in the third, with rubber tapping as well. Three women owned small general stores, one was a seamstress, one (a divorcee) was a travelling saleswoman who sold cloth, one made some extra money by preparing coconut oil that she sold to her neighbors, another helped her husband in his dried fish business, still another taught the Koran to children. Of those who stayed home, all but five were either in the last stages of pregnancy or had babies at home. One of the five was a sick old woman, whose children provided her with food. The other four were married to teachers or other government employees and did not feel the need to supplement the family's relatively large income. One woman provided a significant proportion of her family's income with money derived from her thriving practice as a *bomoh* (medical-magical practitioner) who cured her patients by means of spells, magically treated lines and water, and by healing ceremonies in which she went into trance to divine the cause of their illness and exorcise the spirits of disease.

Two of the more lucrative occupations available to villagers are closed to women: the fishing and lumber industries. The comparison between men's and women's wages may be demonstrated by the fact that on the average sawmill workers (all male) earn M$150-200 a month and

semi-skilled sawmill work can pay M$300-400 a month, while womens' agricultural work rarely brings in more than M$70.

A number of women sell produce locally, from door to door. Formerly, the central market of Kuala Trengganu was predominantly in the control of women. In recent years, a permanent structure made of reinforced concrete after the architectural plan of an American Peace Corps volunteer has resulted in a reorganization of the market, largely along sexual lines. The large money-making shops created by this structure are typically leased by the state government to men, while women are generally relegated to the position of small traders, selling their wares in stalls or on the ground of the open central area. Modernization has taken the market out of the hands of women and effectively limited their activities within its setting.

Many women with young children work part of the day away from home if there is a reliable person with whom to leave the baby, usually a sibling at least seven years old. Girls are expected to help their mothers from an early age with cooking, laundry and childcare. If there are no female older siblings, boys are pressed into service as baby watchers and occasionally wash some of their own clothing or assist their mothers in drawing water from the well. However, the mothers often complain about the difficulty of getting their sons to help out at home. Girls provide so much assistance with domestic tasks that they are often kept home after they complete the sixth grade at the local school, while their brothers go on to junior high at the district capital, 13 miles away. Men often play with their children and carry them about; they are not expected to do domestic work, and those few who cook a meal once in a while may be looked upon as paragons of virtue by their wives, but their neighbors view them as curiosities lacking, perhaps, in masculinity.

The only example I knew of continuous role reversal in the home was in the case of the midwife mentioned above, who combined her profession with rubber tapping

and agricultural work. Her considerably younger husband, aside from an occasional odd job, was responsible only for housework: cooking meals, helping with the laundry and caring for the children. People considered him a kind of "kept man," not worthy of much respect, but his wife was a valued member of the community. Although she supported her family, none of the work she did was outside the boundaries of acceptable female employment, and her reputation as "queen" of the village midwives assured her the esteem due the practitioner of this womanly art. (Of all the traditional birth attendants registered in Malaysia, only three are men.)

In contrast, the female *bomoh* mentioned earlier and her husband retained their roles within the household economy: he worked at the sawmill while she performed the domestic tasks. However, when she assumed her role as shaman (a profession open to women as well as men but rarely practiced in Trengganu), she took center stage while he functioned as her assistant. Before beginning the seance, she changed her blouse and sarong for a black fringed trouser suit which, she claimed, was like the clothes worn by aboriginal men, who always believe to be powerful magicians. While the seance was in progress, she commanded absolute silence and ordered that the front door be locked, allowing none of the casual comings and goings, laughter and whispered conversation that usually take place during such sessions. Her authoritarianism was as atypical for a Malay shaman as was her choice of clothing. Male shamans in Trengganu never wear clothing of the opposite sex, nor do they assume aboriginal dress. Evidently she felt that borrowing male clothing enhanced her authority as a healer and manipulator of spirits, a position of power. However, she could not wear her authority casually, as the male shamans did, but had to reinforce it by the rigid control of her audience.

Women who aspired to non-traditional and more lucrative employment, as, for example, laboratory technicians or policewomen, were obliged to leave the village for training and employment. Except for occasional visits, they were lost to village society.

Women and Local Politics

Both men and women may vote in national and state elections, but men control the local politics. Even the Parent-Teachers Association is dominated by men. This state of affairs cannot be attributed solely to male efforts to keep power out of women's hands. I was present at a meeting of the PTA at which 90% of the parents attending were men. The occasion was the nomination and election of delegates to the local school board. One woman was nominated over her protests and was actually elected to the board by the men present. She declined the position, on the grounds that she would be the only woman present, and would have to attend meetings in the evening unaccompanied by a female companion. Although she was a fairly outspoken woman at home, her own conception of the proper female role, and her awareness of peer pressure from women of the community, prevented her from taking on responsibility that the men considered to be within her capabilities. She appeared to have judged the women's mood accurately, since several of them came to her after the meeting to tell her that they approved of her decision.

Marriage and Divorce

The life of a married woman begins, for most, in the early teens. The median age at marriage is fifteen for women, twenty for men. Pregnancy soon follows. By the time a woman is 35 she can usually expect to have five or more children. Girls and boys are valued equally. No matter how many children a couple may have, if they are all the same sex the family is considered incomplete, and a child of the unrepresented sex may be adopted. For the majority of women and a large proportion of men in the sub-district, the first marriage will last throughout the spouses' lifetimes, but more than a third of the women and almost two-thirds of the men are serial monogamists. This seeming discrepancy is due to the fact that marriage partners are found without as well within the immediate community. The record for multiple serial marriage in the parish went to a man with sixteen wives to his credit.

Most first marriages are still arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. Malays belong to the Shafi'i school of the orthodox, or Sunni, sect of Islam, a school which has been characterized as "definitely less favorable to women than the Hanafi or the Maliki" (Vesey-Fitzgerald 1931:16). Unlike a Hanafi girl, who may give herself in marriage after attaining puberty, a Shafi'i woman must have a guardian (*wali*) to give her away, with her consent, if she is not a virgin, or without her consent, and even against her wishes if she is a virgin. Although there is generally no compulsion in the matter, I have heard stories of girls who deliberately lost their virginity in order to escape dreaded marriages, a desperate move in a country where *khalwat* (close proximity in a secluded place between a Muslim man and woman not married to each other; actual intercourse need not be proven) is punishable by a stiff fine and jail sentence, accompanied by notices in the newspapers of the couple's apprehension by the police. Other girls, less brave but equally stubborn, go through unwelcome marriage ceremonies but refuse to allow conjugal relations, thus provoking a divorce. One of my Malay friends, married at the age of thirteen, frightened and unwilling, consented to the marriage because her groom was the son of a powerful *bomoh* and her family was afraid of supernatural retaliation if she refused.

At the time that the marriage contract is entered into, it is usual for the *mas kahwin* (marriage gold, or payment from the groom to the bride) to be specified. Djamour (1966:17) noted marriage entries in Singapore where the *mas kahwin* for a previously married woman was as low as M$1.00. I attended a wedding at which it was M$1,000.00, the bills arranged before the bride's chair in the shape of three chickens. However much the amount, it can be paid to the bride at once or deferred. In case of divorce, the full amount must be paid to the bride. She also has the right to keep any jewelry she owns. It is common to see village women performing their household tasks adorned with 22-carat gold earrings, bracelets, necklaces and rings set with gems. Women must be prepared to fend for themselves, since, due to the ease of a husband's obtaining a divorce, marriage offers women no guarantee of long-term security. A piece of pawnable

jewelry, as a supplement to a divorced woman's earnings, might mean the difference between proud independence and the humiliation of imposing a financial burden on her kin.

Jewelry functions not only as a nest egg in case of divorce, but can easily be pawned in case of family necessity. Women's jewels follow a seasonal cycle, disappearing into the pawnshop during the monsoon season, when most income-producing labor comes to a standstill, and emerging some months later, when the family has been able to recoup its fortunes.

The east coast states of Kelantan and Trengganu lead the country in the proportion of divorces to marriages, as they lead the country in the proportion of Malays to other ethnic groups. In Trengganu, from 1948 through 1957, divorces were 71.27% of all Muslim marriages (Gordon n.d:26). Divorce is easy for a Malay man. He need only pronounce the *talak* (I divorce thee) to dissolve the marriage. He need not specify any grounds for divorce. It may be the result of long-standing incompatibility or done in a momentary fit of anger. He must then maintain his wife during her *iddah* period of three months, during which time the husband may revoke the divorce and resume cohabitation with his wife. If, during the *iddah* period, the wife discovers that she is pregnant, the husband must support her until the delivery of the child.

About one-sixth of all divorces in Trengganu over the ten year period mentioned above were subsequently revoked (Gordon n.d.). Revocation may take place after the first or second *talak*, but if the husband has pronounced three *talak*, either all at once or over a period of years, the marriage is completely voided and cannot be resumed by the former partners unless an intervening marriage has taken place. If the intervening union is entered into solely for the purpose of satisfying religious law, it is called a *cinabuta* marriage. In Malay, this literally, and according to folk etymology, means "blind Chinese," but it is actually derived from a Sanskrit word meaning "the divider" (Winstedt 1972:73). The *cinabuta* groom is paid by the former husband to accomodate the couple. He divorces the woman shortly after the marriage has been consummated by the performance

of a connubial sex act. The original couple can then marry after the wife's *iddah* period has been completed. Two such cases were public knowledge in my parish, but the fact that the wives had submitted to other men's embraces caused so much embarrassment that neither of the couples was anxious to talk about it.

After the *iddah* period has come to a close, the husband is not required to support his former wife any longer. Besides her *mas kahwin* and any jewelry she has accumulated, she is theoretically entitled to any property with which she entered into the marriage or acquired thereafter. She may also keep wages and earnings acquired by her during marriage in any employment carried on by her and not by her husband, and all savings from any investments of such wages, earnings and property (Siraj n.d.:13). This is not an important consideration in Merchang as most women do not do wage labor. She is also entitled to a share of the *harta syarikat*, the property which was acquired by the joint efforts of the spouses. If she contributed equally to its acquisition, she should receive half. If her husband worked while she kept house for him, she may be entitled to one-third (Djamour 1966:4). How this works out in practice may be quite different. As Shirle Gordon said, ". . . the economic question of Malay women owning or not owning land is fundamental to any discussion of her position, for divorce statistics have a very different import if the divorced woman is or is not the owner of land, for in the rural areas the bulk of employment is related to land." (Gordon n.d.:24). In Merchang, only 22% of the land under cultivation belongs to women (District Officer's records). Thus, upon divorce, many women lose access to the land and are obliged to work as hired hands until they remarry, or to rely upon their parents for support.

With the exception of the three *talak* divorce and subsequent *cinabuta* marriage, there is no stigma attached to divorce and remarriage. The woman usually goes back to her parents' home with her children, to await her next marital episode. Although her ex-husband is under no obligation to support his former wife after the *iddah* period, he is obliged to support his minor children. In many cases, however, the father

defaults on his obligations. This may not work a hardship on those women who remarry quickly and bring their children into the new household, but for those few, usually older women, who remain unmarried and cannot depend on parental support, although the government provides minimal support, the economic consequences of divorce can be severe. Two of the poorest households in the area consisted of a divorced wife in her forties and her children. In one case, the father had moved to another state and had not been heard from in many years. In the other, the husband lived with his second wife not far from his former wife's home. They had a spacious house and a car, while the first wife and her two sons lived in a small and primitive structure. When the younger child became very ill, the father refused to pay for treatment, and the mother had to depend on the charity of a *bomoh*, who treated the boy without fee.

It is possible for a woman to take the initiative in dissolving a Muslim marriage. She may persuade her husband to divorce her by offering some material compensation, such as the surrender of her claim to *mas kahwin* and *iddah* maintenance. This is known as *khula*, or divorce by redemption. A woman can also apply to the *Syariah* (religious) court for dissolution of her marriage by judicial decree (*fasah*) on the grounds of impotence, insanity, a serious or repellent disease such as leprosy, or for aggravated lack of maintenance (Djamour 1966:77). In Trengganu, it is mandatory that a husband make a condition, or *ta'alik*, at the time of marriage to enable the wife to obtain a divorce if the husband should abandon her or injure her seriously by beating. Many women feel that enduring occasional mild physical abuse is a woman's lot. Those who fight back run the risk of having their husbands retaliate by pronouncing the formula of divorce. If the husband breaks the condition, the wife can apply to the *kadzi* (Muslim registrar) for divorce by *cerai ta'alik* (breaking the condition) (Ahmad b. Mohamad Ibrahim n.d.:50). However, few village women have invoked this law, as much from timidity as from ignorance. When one woman in my village was advised to go to the *kadzi* because of aggravated lack of support, she said she would be too embarrassed and frightened to face him. All of these woman-instituted forms of divorce are extremely rare in

Trengganu. From 1958 to 1978, less than 3% of all divorces in Marang District, of which Merchang is a subdistrict, were instituted by women (District Officer's records).

A wife may, of course, not offer any compensation, but make married life so miserable or humiliating for her husband that she goads him into divorce. This procedure ocasionally boomerangs upon the wife. I knew of cases where the husband became so bitter and vengeful that he left his wife but did not record the divorce. She was thus left in limbo, with neither a husband nor a certificate of divorce that would permit her to marry another man.

Although a Muslim man is allowed to marry up to four wives at a time (women are limited to one husband), multiple marriage is quite rare in Merchang, particularly long-term multiple unions. Occasionally a husband will satisfy his urge for sexual variety by marrying a second wife, tiring of her after several months, divorcing her, and returning to his first wife. During the course of a conversation about morality which I had with a *bomoh*, he proudly told me that he never committed the serious sin of sleeping with women to whom he was not married. If he wanted them, he married them. He had already married six short-term wives while keeping his first wife, and he was still a young man, in his early forties. Besides being considered moral behavior, such short-term marriage does not carry the risk of arrest for *khalwat*.

The first wife is expected to be patient and forgiving. She can, and usually does, console herself that her husband's affections have strayed because of love magic employed by the other woman. She may seek the help of a *bomoh* to apply counter-magic. Spells and procedures to compel love or produce hate, to return an erring husband to his wife, to break up an unsuitable attachment, or to cloud the eyes of a cuckolded husband are among the most lucrative of the *bomoh's* skills, and many laymen have learned a few charms to help them in their love lives.

Some wives take matters into their own hands. Rather than rely upon secret retaliation through the means of magic, they resort to open vilification of their

rivals. One senior wife walked a mile each day to the home of her junior co-wife, a neighbor of mine, and stood outside her door, screaming imprecations. The embarrassed husband divorced the younger woman and went back to his old wife. She had been taking a calculated risk, since the affair could have ended with her own divorce. People attributed her success not only to magic, but to the fact that she was a wealthy woman in her own right, whereas the junior wife was a poor widow with several minor children. Money, in this case, outweighed the attractions of youth and beauty.

Men and women are often thought to be faithful to their spouses because of *ilmu* (here, magical knowledge), especially if one of the partners is much older, ill-favored or bad-tempered. In the rare cases of long-term multiple marriage, villagers are convinced that the man must possess a good deal of *ilmu* in order to satisfy more than one wife, and to keep his wives from open warfare with each other. No Malay woman wants to share her husband with another woman, as much for economic reasons as for sexual pride. Men who have more than one wife must arrange to have a separate household for each woman, preferably in separate villages. The possession of *ilmu* is perhaps not as important for a man who wants to practice polygyny as is the possession of some means of transportation. The two men in Merchang who had two wives apiece both had motorcycles. I knew of only one man in the area who currently had three wives: the taxicab owner of a neighboring parish.

Notwithstanding the ease of divorce and the fact that half of my informants had had two or more consecutive spouses, the final marriage is usually stable and lasting. I remember a conversation my husband had with a Malay man, who boasted that the woman he was presently living with was his ninth wife. My husband asked him how long they had been married to each other. After a short discussion with his wife, he turned to my husband and, pointing to his wife, said, "This one has lasted about twenty-five years."

Theories of Conception and Gestation

According to most of the people of Merchang, both laymen and midwives, before conception takes place in the mother's womb, the father has been pregnant for forty days. Indeed, people remember *ex post facto* male food cravings preceding the wife's pregnancy. The baby begins life not as a creation within the mother's belly, but in a more elevated sphere: his father's brain. This theory is made manifest in some of the incantations recited by *bomoh* to ease difficult births:

> Gabriel guarded the seed of life for forty days. Its name was Nur Din (Light of Faith). Then Gabriel put it into the father's brain for forty days. Its name was Nur Allah (Light of God) . . . It fell to his eyes, Nur Chahaya (Gleaming Light); fell to his chest, True Sultan of Happy Feelings, navel of the world; fell to the big toe, King Penis is its name. Then you pray forty times a day, forty times a night. Then you stay within the father forty days, *di, wadi, mani, manikam* (elements of spermatic fluid). From *di* comes earth, from *wadi* comes water, from *mani* comes fire, from *manikam* comes air. Then you are thrust into the mother's womb.

This portion of a birth incantation is a clear metaphoric statement about the essential nature of male and female. Humanity was formed of earth and partakes of animal nature (*hawa nafsu*), but also possesses rationality (*akal*), which makes us higher than the angels (cf. Siegel 1969). But although men and women both have *akal* and *hawa nafsu*, self-control and rationality in their most developed state are considered masculine qualities, while the emotions and hungers of the body are associated with women. This concept is made manifest in the incantation: the baby is formed in the father's brain and receives its *akal* from its most developed source. Then it drops to the father's eyes where it is called *Nur Cahaya*, an esoteric variation of a common affectionate term, *cahaya mata* (light of my eyes). The eyes are considered to be the baby's first human attribute by Malay mystics and practitioners of *Main Peteri*, the east

coast shamanistic healing ceremony; they are among the forces and guardians of the body personified and invoked in this ceremony (for a further discussion of *Main Peteri*, see Laderman 1980 and 1981). As the baby makes its way down, it arrives at the father's chest, the center of the universe in microcosm, the dwelling place of the emotions. It is not until the baby has experienced his father's rationality and human emotions that it descends to the penis and is thrust into the mother's womb, the dark matrix of our animal nature. There it finds a resting place, like a seed which has been planted in the nourishing earth. Already formed from the four elements of the father's spermatic fluid, the same four elements of which the world is made, it will develop in the darkness of the mother's body until it can emerge, like a flower, into the light.

This theory of conception not only gives the father a role to play in the formation and birth of his child, it actually gives him the superior part. Far from being a mere "opener of the way," who contributes nothing material to the baby's development, or even an equal partner in conception, the Malay father is both genitor and primary nourisher in whose body the baby begins its life. His contribution to the child is the quintessential part of humanity: the rational mind which sets man apart from the beasts. He and the baby are physically tied during gestation; his actions can affect the baby prenatally as much as those of its mother.

For example, pregnant women are cautioned not to tie cloths around their throats or arms for fear that the umbilical cord will loop itself around the baby's throat in imitation of their behavior. They try to guard against being startled as this might "mark" the baby. Fathers are warned that sitting on their house steps and blocking the entrance may sympathetically cause their wives' birth canals to be obstructed, making delivery difficult. Men are aware of the possible consequences of their behavior during their wives' pregnancies. Vicious behavior towards animals, such as gratuitously cutting off the legs of a crab or the toes of a chicken may result in the child being born with its digits short or missing. Killing cats or dogs might even find an echo in the

death of a baby in utero. If the father forgets to recite a little spell while performing dangerous or questionable acts during his wife's pregnancy, this may harm the unborn child. The possible consequences of a father's breaking the psychic tie by momentarily forgetting the unborn baby or by performing acts of cruelty or negligence are translated into a physical idiom ranging from minor transient problems to deformity or death. The psychic tie, in this way, becomes a physical tie which is not broken until the child has been delivered and the umbilical cord cut. Cutting the cord releases the child from its observable tie to its mother and its invisible tie to its father.

Dangers of Childbirth

Few reports on Malay childbirth fail to mention the dreadful *penanggalan* and *langsuir*, or *pontianak* (McHugh 1959:79; Skeat 1900:passim; Winstedt 1951:22; Colson 1971:65; Chen 1973:199-200; Chen 1974-75:338). The *langsuir* (sometimes referred to as the *pontianak*) is a vampire-like creature who was once an ordinary woman. She takes on demon form as a result of dying in childbirth. According to some accounts (McHugh 1959:79), she is strangely deformed. Not only has her behavior reversed itself, from a nourisher of babies to their destroyer, but her body has also undergone a reversal. Her breasts, the organs of nourishment, have left their normal position and are now located on her back. Under them, or at the base of her neck, is a cavity through which she sucks the blood of children. According to others (Skeat 1900:326), she is very beautiful and tempting and may even fool a man into marrying her, but her long black hair conceals the horrid hole. A *langsuir* may be changed back from a demon to a human woman if a man places a nail or other long, hard, pointed piece of iron or steel into the hole. After its insertion, the hole closes up and no mark can be seen where the gap had been.

The other birth demon mentioned in most accounts is the *penanggalan*, a disembodied woman's head with trailing intestines. Like the *langsuir*, the *penanggalan* is not considered an imminent threat by most Trengganu women,

but people still tell stories about them. One account of the *penanggalan's* origin says that she studied magic with a devil who taught her how to loosen her head and neck from her body in order to fly about and suck the blood of women in childbirth (Abdullah 1969:115-117). Another (Skeat 1972:327-328) tells of a woman who sat naked in a vat of palm wine to mortify her body as a means of obtaining magic power. When a man came upon her unexpectedly, she was so startled that, on trying to escape, she kicked her chin with such force that the skin split around her neck, and her head, with intestines pendant, separated from her body and flew off.

The startle reaction is considered by Malays to have far-reaching consequences. It may result in loss of one's vital spirit, leaving one vulnerable to spirit attacks. A woman startled in pregnancy may pass on the characteristics of the object of her fear to her unborn child. In this legend of the *penanggalan*, the woman is startled because she has been caught attempting to gain control over unseen forces in a socially disapproved manner. Rather than losing any part of her own spirit, she herself joins the spirit world.

One of my Malay friends told me yet another story of the *penanggalan's* origin. She was originally a flirtatious woman. One day, as she was leaning out of the window of her house, smiling and calling to passing men, her husband caught her and grabbed hold of her body to pull her back into the house. In her struggle, her head came loose from her body, together with her intestines, leaving her husband with an empty shell while she went flying away.

All of these legends have a common theme: the Malay birth demons are women who have not fulfilled or who have reversed their normal roles. The *langsuir* has been unsuccessful in completing her womanly task of giving birth. She is an empty woman, whose gaping hole is dangerous and threatening. She can only be controlled by the introduction of a phallic object into her yawning pit. She is restored to humanity by the power of this symbolic sex act.

A Euro-American analysis of the *penanggalan's* origins might assume that the woman leaves her husband with an empty body when he interferes with the freedom of her mind. In the context of rural Malay society, however, there is a different context to this myth. The ideal of Malay womanhood is a deferential, compliant and circumspect wife. In the legend of the *penanggalan,* the woman's openly immodest behavior has already put her in opposition to her normal role. It takes just another small turn, in the world of myth, for her to lose not only her womanliness but her humanity as well.

Danger to a woman in labor may come from within herself, as well as from the demons of childbirth. A woman who, during pregnancy, has stepped out of her feminine role, offending her husband or attempting to dominate him, may find herself experiencing a prolonged or difficult delivery. She may run a similar risk if she has been unfaithful to her husband, even in thought. Malays believe that, since women are naturally passive and follow their husbands' lead, a woman who reverses her role may have difficulty in carrying out her natural function of childbirth. In order to restore harmony and order to the universe and return the erring wife to her proper place, her husband is instructed by the midwife to step over his wife's supine body three times, in a gesture which graphically illustrates which sex must be on top and which must be in danger of being trodden underfoot, however symbolically, to insure reproductive success. If she is suspected of having touched or thought of another man carnally, she may be asked to drink water into which her husband has dipped his penis. Oral sex, practiced by men upon women, seems unthinkable to most Malay men. It is so repellent that, they feel, it would make them vomit. Women can sometimes be persuaded to practice it upon their husbands, but it is considered to be somewhat humiliating. When she drinks the treated water, the husband's dominance over his wife is reestablished, and her submission to her wifely duties should facilitate her labor by placing her in her proper position as a woman and a wife. (For a further discussion of childbirth in rural Malaysia see Laderman 1979.)

Summary and Discussion

The rural Malay woman in Trengganu occupies a position somewhere in the middle of a world continuum, from low status to high. Girl babies receive the same welcome and care that their male counterparts receive, and neither female infanticide nor the attrition of girls by conscious or unconscious neglect have ever been part of Malay culture. Women are not kept in purdah or required to wear a chador or veil. They have some degree of economic and personal autonomy. Neither divorce nor widowhood precludes a subsequent marriage.

On the other hand, the ease of obtaining a divorce for a Malay man makes marriage a problematic and insecure relationship, since a wife who steps too far out of her proper role may find herself divorced and cast back upon her own or her family's resources for financial support. Unlike some other Islamic countries, such as Tunis, where polygyny has been prohibited (Liebesny 1975: 151), or Morocco, where a marriage contract may specify that the husband cannot marry a second wife (Liebesny 1975:152), or Iraq, where a man who desires to marry double must prove to a judge that the intended junior wife would be better off in this union than she would as another man's sole wife (Liebesny 1975:151), in Malaysia marriage laws allow a husband to marry up to four wives at a time, and religious law requires that he treat each wife equally. No Malay woman to whom I have spoken is happy about these circumstances, for economic as well as sexual reasons, since even-handed treatment of several wives means that each will have a share in the material wealth that would have enriched one, had she been the sole beneficiary. Although the law provides redress for an abandoned or severely beaten wife, few rural women are prepared to face an authority to demand their rights.

There are also laws that require divorced fathers to support their minor children. However, these are too often honored in the breach. The economic insecurity engendered by Malay marriage rules promotes the acquisition of easily pawnable gold jewelry, which is

also used to tide the family over monsoon seasons. When one realizes the importance of such jewelry to Malay wives, one can understand the urgency with which they plead with their husbands to redeem their gold from the pawnbroker once the family's finances have reached an even keel. I heard a particularly melodramatic Malay wife, given to asthmatic episodes, tell her husband that if he did not redeem her necklace within the next week she would surely die during her next asthmatic attack.

Although it is important for a divorced woman who may find herself in an equivocal financial position to have property or employment to fall back on, only a minority of women in Merchang own land. Most women work, but they are barred from the more lucrative positions in the village, and receive a fraction of men's wages for agricultural work. Their status, economically, politically and socially, is a continuation of their status in marriage.

The Malay ideal of wifely behavior is that of a modest, retiring and compliant woman. Behavioral reality, however, may deviate in a number of ways that help define the norm, and can result in a variety of consequences. Occasionally deviant behavior can increase a woman's status, as in the case of the female shaman who received prestige and derived a substantial part of her family's income from her professional activities. It may also result in a viable alternative lifestyle, such as that of the midwife and her husband who reversed their roles in the domestic sphere. In a majority of cases, however, serious deviation from the norm results in gossip and divorce.

One of my neighbors had a temper to match that of her husband, and did not hesitate to retaliate when he hit her. The dishes she threw at him broke into pieces, and so did her marriage. She was instantly rewarded with a three *talak* divorce. Her husband later regretted his impetuosity and missed his children, so he was obliged to hire a man to cooperate in a *cinabuta* marriage. Even though the incident had happened many years earlier, their female neighbors never seemed to tire of this interesting bit of gossip, and the consensus among them was

that the wife had gotten what she deserved.

The mechanisms for keeping a Malay woman in her place, or putting her back if she has strayed, include her own internalization of the stereotype and the reinforcement of the norm by other women, as well as laws, customs and ideology which put Malay men in a superior position. Even in the area of reproduction, usually thought of as woman's quintessential role, popular Malay belief credits the father, rather than the mother, with the baby's highest development, since it receives human rationality and emotions from the father, and animal passions from the mother. Levi-Strauss' dichotomy between the raw and the cooked (1969) is unmistakable in this context: Malay men represent Culture, while women represent Nature (cf. Ortner 1974).

Should labor be prolonged or delivery difficult, Malays believe that it may be because the woman has violated feminine norms. She must be put back in her proper place by her husband's symbolic actions, so that she can deliver her baby safely.

The female demons of childbirth were once human women, but, due to their unfeminine actions or the unsuccessful completion of their womanly tasks, they have become monsters who reverse the natural order. These demons, however, present no danger to men, but only to members of their own sex. Instead of comforting the woman in childbirth and nourishing the infant as normal women would do, they batten on the mother's blood and raven after her babies. Female role reversal is thus symbolically represented as a threat to all other women, and the implication is that it is in the interest of women to keep rebellious members of their sex in line.

Although their content differs, the mechanisms which keep a rural Malay woman in her place are similar to those in our own culture. They come from many interconnected facets of the society: the economic sphere, marriage and divorce laws and customs, through ideology and the symbolic content of reproduction, from peer pressure of other women, and, not least, from internalization of her role by the woman herself.

NOTES

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Chapter Six

WOMEN IN JAVA'S RURAL MIDDLE CLASS: PROGRESS OR REGRESS?

Valerie J. Hull

Introduction

Much of the literature on the role of women in the Third World conveys an impression of women as a cohesive group facing common problems in homogeneous rural societies. While such a picture may be valid in some contexts, and while this approach may have been useful initially in simply drawing attention to the study of women, we must now give attention to the fact that different economic classes generally imply very important differences in the position of women, and that this has implications for development planning. To the extent that ongoing rural social change affects various strata of the population differently these socioeconomic contrasts in the role of women will have increasing importance.

The expansion of education in particular has contributed to the emergence of a new rural middle class in many countries; we are referring here not to the small group of highly educated elite women, but to the often quite considerable numbers of younger women who can read and write, and who have been exposed to ideas which relate to concerns beyond their immediate village life patterns. In Indonesia, great emphasis is placed on the role this educational expansion will play in the

country's development, and the particular importance of educational opportunities for women has been given initial recognition by government planners. The country monograph prepared by Indonesia for World Population Year specifically highlights this point, stating: "An improvement in education will . . . promote female emancipation in the household as well as society and achieve a better social position for women in Indonesia" (CICRED 1974:22).

What kinds of changes in the role of women does "modernization," and particularly education, bring? Does it help prepare women to participate in rural development programs? Can the changes which are occurring now indeed be considered "development" themselves? Although technological change in the agricultural sector has been the subject of much criticism because of its impact on employment, particularly work opportunities for women, the expansion of education is often accepted without question as being wholly beneficial to women. It is seen as the key to a more egalitarian position for women within the family--as a prerequisite to lowering family size norms and to successful practice of family planning--and it is linked to higher rates of female employment, membership in organizations and more desire and freedom to participate in extrafamilial activities in general. It seems appropriate to ask whether this pattern is only attained in the developed world and among the highly educated urban elite of the Third World, or if it is also true for rural middle class women in developing countries. Is there an "education threshhold" which must be reached before the desired changes in the position of women become apparent? And most importantly, what is the relation of the nature and the quality of schooling to these changes?

This paper will attempt to deal with some of these questions through the detailed examination of "middle class" and poor groups in a village in Java, the most populous of the Indonesian islands. In particular I will examine aspects of the position of women among these groups in order to see the sort of patterns of social behavior which currently prevail in Java. In terms of many of the criteria used to define a favorable

position of women, the Javanese woman would seem to be ahead of her sisters in many other countries of Asia, and particularly in relation to other Muslim societies. Her jural status is relatively favorable, though more importantly her actual position in daily life is, overall, quite strong. Unlike some societies, the Javanese do not automatically consider women to be ignorant or incompetent; it is the general practice in Java for the woman to contribute to the household economy, and to manage financial affairs of the household unit. Most Javanese, both male and female, would agree that women are more resourceful and more clever at handling themselves in general than are men. In the Maguwoharjo survey discussed in this paper, for example, about three-quarters of the married couples agreed with the statement "In general, females are more clever than males," with the proportions agreeing among men and women being virtually the same. Many observers have commented particularly on the economic independence, freedom of movement, and overall self-reliance of "the Javanese woman" (Vreede de Stuers 1960; Geertz 1961; Mintz 1961; Suwondo 1968; Jay 1969). This paper examines the degree to which the observations and generalizations made about "the Javanese woman" hold true for different social classes and, particularly, different education groups in the village context.

In rural Javanese society there are traditional status hierarchies based on landholding and descent but other stratification criteria such as education and occupation have increased in importance with the spread of schooling, urban influence, and other aspects of social change. In practice both traditional and modern status criteria frequently become blended since the larger landholders are also those able to afford to educate their children, are more likely to have family members in civil service positions in town, and frequently own customer items such as motorcycles which are identified with the city. During the colonial period, too, the ancient status hierarchy based on descent from Javanese nobility became fused with modern status categories when the Dutch appointed selected Javanese (often nobility) to civil service positions. Needing

personnel for government administration, the Dutch provided education in Indonesia and Holland for Javanese selected from the class with which they had the most contact, the nobles. At one time in history, the Javanese bureaucracy at levels below the Dutch administrators was composed almost entirely of the hereditary aristocracy.

The particular village studied, Maguwoharjo, is located in central Java, about ten kilometers from the city of Yogyakarta. It was the site of a year-long research project in 1972-73 which focused on socio-demographic variables. The research combined survey technique with participant observation, with the principal researchers and assistants residing in the village for the duration of the project. Detailed economic data were collected for nearly 1400 households, marriage and fertility data for 1200 ever-married women, and data on various aspects of family relations for 950 currently married women and their husbands.

In the section which follows, I will describe specific components of the place of women in daily life, including extrafamilial activities, particularly employment and husband-wife relations, and childbearing and family planning. It will be shown that although middle-class women have obtained formal schooling and have had greater exposure to modern ideas in general, they are more home and family-centered than are lower-class women, but at the same time do not have measurably greater authority within the family unit. The concluding section will summarize some of the factors contributing to this pattern, describing the traditional Javanese conception of women's roles, the focus of the Indonesian women's movement, and the influence of modern education, both formal and non-formal.

Socioeconomic Class in Maguwoharjo

Maguwoharjo was selected in part for its mixed socioeconomic composition; there were a number of village

residents who commuted daily to jobs in town, and a nearby Air Force base provided jobs for many others. Thus the middle class includes not only large landowners and others holding high positions in a traditional hierarchy but, very importantly, a "new" rural middle class involved in non-agricultural occupations and having in most cases attained at least a grade school education.

In the course of the research in Maguwoharjo, a wide variety of information on social and economic characteristics was collected for each household unit and household member. This included detailed data on all economic activities, religion, education, land ownership and control, consumption patterns and ownership of specific household and productive items, and an estimate of household income level. Most of the discussion which follows will refer to two major income groups as indicators of a household's economic class, and two education levels as basic measures of an individual woman's social status. There is, of course, a strong positive relation between economic class and education (V. Hull 1975:45-47).

In the discussion, I will sometimes use terms of a rather imprecise nature such as "rich" or "poor," "middle-class" and "lower-class" to refer to the income and education groups being compared. It should be understood that these refer only to relative standing within the community, and are meant to convey some of the contrasts in social position and overall lifestyle which are observed daily in Maguwoharjo. Some idea of the characteristics of upper-income (middle-class) and lower-income (lower-class) women can be gained from the following general descriptions.

Lower-income women in Maguwoharjo work primarily as farmers on very small plots of land (70% of farming families own or control less than 2000 square meters of rice land), as agricultural laborers working on someone else's land for a small daily wage or share of the harvest, and as petty traders in the local market place selling produce, herbs and cooking spices, and the like.

In monetary terms "lower income" meant, in 1972, that the total household income was less than Rp. 100, or 25 U.S. cents, per day. In Maguwoharjo, about half of all households studied fell into this category. Most lower income families live in thatched bamboo houses with dirt floors; their diet consists largely of rice and a few vegetables, though some have to substitute a cheaper food such as cassava for the rice during certain periods of the year. Their material possessions consist of some basic furniture; only a small minority own a radio, watch, or similar items of wealth and prestige. Most of the women in this group have never been to school or have attended only a few years of primary school. With the expansion of education since Independence, most women born since the 1950s are likely to have achieved at least a few years of education. Schooling is expensive, however, and education above the primary level is still beyond the reach of most low income families.

The upper income group in Maguwoharjo is composed mainly of households headed by military (Air Force) and military-civilian personnel, by civil servants including village officials, and by farmers with large landholdings. Virtually all of the men and two-thirds of the ever-married women in this group have had formal schooling, and the majority of children from these households are still in school at ages 17-19, or upper secondary level. This group is certainly not wealthy by Western standards, nor even in comparison to some urban groups in Indonesia. However, their life includes a number of comforts which set them apart from their lower income neighbors. Only a fifth of those defined as "upper income" in Maguwoharjo live in simple bamboo houses with dirt floors; the majority have homes with improvements such as concrete floors, brick or wood extensions, or homes constructed entirely of brick and concrete. Upper income families eat rice all year round, nearly half eat meat at least once a week, and half are eligible for a monthly rice allowance from the government as part of their salary. They generally own several articles of furniture, most own a radio and at least one family member is likely to have a watch. Many own a sewing machine and at least one kerosene pressure lamp. Virtually all upper income households have at least one bicycle, and a few own a

motorcycle. Women in this social class travel more frequently to the city and have greater access to various forms of communication from outside the village.

It should be stressed that at the present time the way of life of the poor group perhaps best characterizes the largest proportion of central Java's adult population. However, since our emphasis is on the changing rural environment we must examine the impact of the changes underway. As indicated above, in Maguwoharjo and in Indonesia as a whole, there has been rapid growth of the education system since the 1950s, following Independence. For example, the proportion of Maguwoharjo women with no schooling declines from 66% among those aged 30-39 (the cohort born before Independence) to 18% of those currently aged 20-29 and to only 5% among 10-19 year olds. Most of this "education boom" refers to primary school and perhaps lower secondary school. Only a minority of girls even today are still in school after age 13 (Indonesia Central Bureau of Statistics 1975:96). Because of this trend we must emphasize the need for focusing on the forces and impact of social change as they relate not only to a currently small elite, but also to a rapidly expanding middle class as described above.

Women's Extrafamilial Activities

Employment. Javanese generally believe that a husband and wife should work together as a team for the maintenance of the family (Koentjaraningrat 1964:151). However, the society has always been highly stratified, and historically the families of Javanese nobles had a very different idea about a woman's place. Daughters and wives were confined to house compounds where, having many servants, they tended "to live idle confined lives" (Dutch Commission of Enquiry 1901, quoted in Vreede de Stuers 1960:51-52). Only certain high prestige "occupations," such as batik making in the home, were permitted to them. It was principally the lower-class women who worked, and working, especially outside the home, has always been a mark of low social status. This is, of course, a nearly universal phenomenon in developing countries and also historically in the West, and it has important implications for the attitudes of contemporary rural middle-class women.

Respondents in the Maguwoharjo survey were asked what they felt was the best arrangement for the household economy: a husband who supports the family, or both husband and wife working together as a team. There was a strong tendency for the replies of higher socioeconomic status women, and especially younger women, to depart from the Javanese "tradition" of an economic team. Contrasts were particularly striking by education. Among women who were high school graduates, 65% answered that a husband should fully support a family, and that a wife should stay at home.

The actual pattern of economic activity also varies by socioeconomic status, as is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Percentage of Currently Married Women Who Are Working[1], According to Age, Income Group, and Educational Level. Maguwoharjo 1972-73.

Current Age Group	Income		Education	
	Lower Income	Upper Income	No School	Graduate Primary School and above
20-24	61	23	(67)[2]	26
25-29	79	34	66	30
30-34	76	57	77	56
35-39	88	51	83	(23)
40-44	89	59	79	(38)
45-49	87	73	86	(46)
50-54	(86)	(69)	80	(50)

Note: 1. Work includes all economic activities outside domestic work. Data were collected on all activities performed by women; if a woman's reported primary activity was "housework" but she also worked as a farmer part of the time, she is included as economically active for the purposes of this analysis.

2. Parentheses indicate fewer than 30 cases in the category under consideration.

It is clear that, particularly within the younger age groups (in fact the childbearing period), the women we have defined as the middle class are much less likely to be working in economic activities other than household tasks. This tendency is especially strong in the case of women with primary school education or more. Even among those aged 35 and over, only a minority are working.

The reasons women gave for not working were recorded both during the survey and following informal conversations. Certainly a major factor was that for a middle class woman, there is no economic necessity for working outside of household duties. More importantly, the fact that she does not work is an indication that her husband has a good enough position to support the family. Being a housewife is a privilege, indicating that one is free to choose to stay at home.

The status associated with not working is only one factor influencing work-force participation in Maguwoharjo. The practice of an economic partnership in the lower class is facilitated by the fact that both husband and wife can work in the same economic sector, often at the same job (farming, laboring, trading). Among the middle class, however, the husband's job tends to be outside of these common areas and often takes him physically away from the village. Thus the wife of a man in this position would generally have to seek a completely separate job in a different field. Very importantly, she considers that virtually none of the jobs commonly available for women in the village would confer the necessary high, or even medium level, status consistent with the other dimensions of her social position. The jobs performed by most women, those of farm laborer or petty trader, are considered degrading.

Another factor, crucial in its implications for both work-force participation and for fertility levels, is the prevailing attitude toward working mothers. The head of the village, as just one example, felt very strongly that his wife should not work because "A mother's duty is to give her children a proper education and the right values; if a woman works, her children

are neglected." The wife of another government official said that she and her husband feel she should devote full time to the very important duty of taking care of and educating the children who will "determine Indonesia's future." Her husband has supported this attitude by telling her that her job is more important than his because all he does is earn money to fill the family's material needs.

Charges of child neglect among lower-class working women were frequently made by women of the middle-class. The issue became a particularly vivid one when the seven-month old baby of one of our neighbors died. While there was some debate as to the specific cause of death of the child, there was general agreement among the village elite as to the indirect cause: the mother had returned to her trader's job, and the baby was thus not receiving proper care. When women were asked on the survey whether or not they agreed with the statement "if a woman with young children has a job, she cannot take care of her children well," the majority of women in all social classes in fact agreed, although understandably proportions were larger among educated middle-class women (73%) than those without schooling (60%). However, it was disturbing to find that fully 50% of women with small children who are currently working responded that a woman in their own position "cannot take care of her children well."

Considering actual work patterns, it might be added that the middle-class women who are working tend to be older women with school age children, and are also more likely to be working at jobs in the home, such as dressmaking or managing small shops. We might also mention here that being a housewife, which is of course also an economic activity, usually implies different kinds of activities according to social class. Lower-class women often spend a great deal of time at such tasks as looking for firewood, carrying water up from the river for cooking, carrying clothes down to the river for washing, and so on. A middle-class housewife, in contrast, will more often purchase her firewood or use kerosene for cooking; she would also be more likely to have a well for her water supply. Some of these women in Maguwoharjo also had household servants to help with many chores. While the middle-class housewife's activities are nevertheless

an economic contribution, they are fewer in number and less time-consuming than those of the poor villagers, and, also importantly, are less likely to take her away from the home.

In summary, we can say that the probability of a woman working is inversely related to social class in Maguwoharjo. This is not to claim, however, that the status of the lower-class woman is necessarily "better" because she has a clear productive role in the society. The poor uneducated women are working primarily out of economic necessity, and in jobs to which the society attaches little respect. The position of middle-class women might be said to represent "progress" insofar as they are free to work or not. The fact remains, however, that they generally choose domestic roles because of practical and attitudinal constraints against working. Any development program stressing female labor force participation and jobs as contributions to the development process--including jobs which are currently regarded with disdain--will be faced with these strong and deeply-rooted attitudes.

Membership in Organizations. In addition to female employment, studies of women's roles have also placed emphasis on participation in organizations as an important component of women's extrafamilial activities, and as a potentially effective way of involving women in aspects of rural development. In Maguwoharjo membership in formal organizations was definitely a middle-class phenomenon; whereas about half of upper-income women and educated women belonged to various clubs or associations, this was true for less than one-fourth of lower-class women. Only 6% of lower-income women were members of women's organizations or social groups. Most of those who belonged to any group belonged to rotating credit associations and Koran-reading groups. This is explainable in part by the fact that lower-class women are involved in daily economic activities, but the very nature of the major women's organizations is also important. In general they are elite and urban-based, and are usually linked to various high-status occupations of husbands. Examples include wives of police personnel,

wives of doctors, and wives of railway employees.

The significance of membership in organizations as an indicator of the position of women is in fact doubtful in the Javanese context. Rather than providing women with an orientation away from home and family, the activities of most women's clubs in the area in fact focus on these aspects, concentrating on things such as cooking, flower arranging, and home decoration. For the same reasons, we may also hypothesize that reading books, magazines, and even newspapers is not playing an important role in broadening women's horizons beyond family and home. Women in Maguwoharjo did not read books and the majority of women with a primary school education or more reported that they never read the newspapers. Among the few who did read a newspaper, the most common pattern was to read only the weekly women's section.

Once again, it appears that the current interests and orientation of middle-class women in Maguwoharjo indicate limited potential for real integration in rural development.

Household Management and Husband-Wife Relations

As we have said, it is the general practices in Java for the wife to play a major role in the financial affairs of the household. It is not surprising to find this pattern in Maguwoharjo. However it is interesting that, despite the hopes of policymakers that education actually improves a woman's position in this regard, there do not appear to be any major differences based on educational attainment or economic class. In each income and education category, around 80% of currently married women claim it is they who actually keep the household money and either both husband and wife (about 55-60% or wife alone (35-40%) who make the decisions on how to spend it.

Though husbands and wives appear to cooperate on financial decisions to some extent in both social classes, there are striking differences in the proportions of couples who discuss such topics as family size, children's education, and family planning. Among the lower

class, over half of the currently married women said they had never discussed either the number of children they wanted or methods to prevent pregnancy with the husbands. Most middle-class, and in particular educated women claimed to have discussed both ideal family size and family planning with their spouses. Discussion of children's education also showed strong concentration among the better-off, more educated women. Despite the general positive value put on education in the society, over a third of the poor claimed to "never" or "seldom" discuss their children's schooling. For many of these women, of course, limits to education are clearly defined by economic constraints, and there is really very little to discuss or plan concerning schooling beyond the primary level.

Although increased husband-wife communication is often assumed to be a result of higher education, this pattern in Maguwoharjo appears to be related to a more fundamental class difference in marriage patterns, particularly the selection of a mate, and husband-wife relations within marriage. Parental arrangement of marriage is much more common among the lower class, even though this practice has been declining over time. Also, age at marriage has been increasing, a trend which is especially dramatic among educated women and this is also related to the method of arrangement of marriage. Among younger generation women (those aged 15-34), parentally arranged marriages accounted for 53% of first marriages of lower-income women and 66% among women without schooling. In contrast, the corresponding figures for upper-income women and those with at least a primary school education were only 35% and 25% respectively.

Among lower-class women, situational factors--factors which are often beyond the control of the individuals involved--play a much greater role in marriage, from its initial arrangement to its possible dissolution. For example, divorce is more likely in cases where marriage has been arranged by parents. In arranging a marriage for their daughter, parents are aware of the strong possibility of a subsequent divorce, but this involves little or no social stigma. Hildred Geertz

(1961:137-139) has contrasted the attitudes toward divorce among lower-class and upper-class women in Java, stating that in the lower class divorce is neither right nor wrong, but often the easiest and best solution to a conflict situation or generally unsatisfactory marriage. Some cases of divorce in Maguwoharjo involved reasons which a Western middle-class observer would consider unusual or even trivial, such as conflicts over place of residence, or attribution of family illness or misfortune to a mismatched union which is then dissolved at the advice of a village soothsayer. Geertz has written that upper-class women, in contrast, perceive divorce as an action which shows lack of self-control, a trait which they value highly and see as characterizing their class as opposed to the more impetuous lower class. One such informant told Geertz that she "would never divorce any more than she would carry a basket on her back" (p. 139), thus indicating middle-class attitudes both toward marriage and toward the work commonly performed by village women. In Maguwoharjo, nearly half (47%) of women aged 45 and over in the lower-income group had their first marriage end in divorce, as opposed to only 24% of upper-income women in that age group.

The fact that lower-class women are working women may also be related to differences in the husband-wife relationship and the frequency of divorce. Even in the West, it has been recognized that in the lower socioeconomic class a wife's working may result in more segregated husband-wife roles (Hawthorn 1970:104) rather than the joint roles thought to be associated with employment in Western middle-class society. The economic self-reliance of the Javanese women has also been considered a "facilitating factor" in decisions to divorce (Geertz 1961): divorce is simply not the disaster it could be if a woman did not have the ability to earn her own living.[1]

The situation for the middle-class woman is different. She is generally dependent on her husband for support, so that, in practical economic terms as well as socially, divorce is seen as having much more serious consequences for her. This relates not only to the incidence of divorce but to the pressures for remarrying. In Maguwoharjo, it was found that, even after controlling

for age at marital dissolution, lower-income women were more likely to remain between marriages for a longer period of time or else not remarry at all. The large majority of these lower-income women were completely self-supporting following the dissolution of a marriage, except at very young ages. The few upper-income women who were divorced or widowed were more likely to depend on other family members until they could remarry. One elite Maguwoharjo woman who remarried within 6 months of a divorce claimed that an important motivation for her remarriage was that "a woman without a husband is in a lowly position in society."

Related to these differences in marriage patterns are other contrasts in ideals about marriage and in the marriage relationship itself. When discussing what was felt to be the most important reason for women to get married, lower-class respondents stressed both having children and forming an economic partnership. Among middle-class women, the proportion mentioning children was higher, and some women also mentioned "love and companionship," a reason that virtually did not appear in the response of the lower-class. Fewer middle-class women offered "economic partnership" as a response than was the case among lower-class women.

While neither group is characterized by the jointly-organized conjugal roles idealized in the West, middle-class Javanese women nevertheless come closer to that pattern than do lower-class women. Although husband and wife in both classes rarely attend social activities together, the few occasions when this occurred were only among middle-class couples, and in particular among the small Christian minority, since Church activities were more likely to be oriented toward couples and families. Much of what has been written concerning conjugal role organization, however, seems to assume that the presence of jointly-organized conjugal roles implies a better status for a woman, that "togetherness" implies an inherently favorable position, "separateness" implies an inferior one. It would seem that this is one manifestation of what Paulme (1963) has described as a tendency for "any divergence from the Western idea" to be

interpreted as indicating a lowered status for women. Theories concerning marital roles have also been related to a woman's desire for children, most notably by Rainwater in relation to America's working class. He claims (1960:193; 1965:87) that where marital roles are segregated, a woman's relation to her children becomes more important. Because she feels isolated from her husband, the main alternative source for "interpersonal gratification" is her children.

Both of these ideas concerning women with segregated marriage roles--that they have an inherently lower status and that they seek interpersonal gratification from their children as a substitute for the husband-wife relationship--must be evaluated for their applicability in the Javanese context. In Maguwoharjo, the lower-class women who exhibit conjugal role segregation have a number of alternative social areas in which they interact and obtain "interpersonal gratification," where they express individuality, and where they exert influence. For many women in the village, contacts with other females, kin and non-kin, represent strong and important bonds. Common sights in Maguwoharjo are women together daily in the market place, women gathering to chat in front of a neighbor's house, women working together to prepare food for a neighborhood feast, or joking together in the kitchen during a shadow puppet performance. To a certain extent, of course, all women are part of this network of village females, but it was apparent that middle-class women were seen outside much less frequently, and tended to stay home in the evening in particular. Even during the day, middle-class women generally remained close to their homes, illustrating once again the tendency to be more home-centered in general. Although they did not exhibit very close conjugal ties compared to the Western conception, the marriage bond was more central to their lives, and daily interaction outside the family was more limited than was the case among lower-class women.

It is difficult to evaluate the extent to which changing family patterns among the middle-class represent "progress" or "regress." Our approach in future research

on these aspects should probably focus on what kinds of patterns support or conflict with various specific national ideological and development goals and with the overall social goal of integrating women into the development process. In undertaking such an evaluation, we should attempt to free ourselves as much as possible of Western notions of what comprises "ideal" family organization.

Childbearing and Family Planning

In Maguwoharjo, it is the middle-class woman who is more likely to have a large number of children, both ever-born and surviving. More than half of upper-income women aged 45+ have given birth to seven or more children. Average family sizes for each age group according to income and education are shown in Table 3. The observed direct relation between social and economic class and fertility has been noted in many studies in Indonesia, including intensive community studies, large-scale sample surveys, and the national census (Hull and Hull 1976).

The reasons for the positive relation between socio-economic status and fertility are complex, and include both voluntary and involuntary restrictions on the fertility of the lower class (V. Hull 1976). Perhaps the two most important involuntary factors are the frequency of marital disruption among the poor (particularly, as we have shown, divorce) and the apparently greater incidence of secondary sterility, perhaps related to differential nutrition and disease patterns.

The major voluntary factor accounting for differential fertility is the use of traditional forms of contraception, in particular long post-partum abstinence. This practice is more common among lower-class respondents, where it is often associated with longer breast-feeding periods. Thus the average length of birth intervals, even after controlling for the influence of marital disruption, is longer among the poor and uneducated. In the middle-class, and particularly among young educated women, the duration of breastfeeding is shorter,

Table 3

Average Number of Children Ever Born and Still Living to Ever-Married Women According to Age, Income Group, and Education. Maguwoharjo 1972-73.

Age Group	Income Group		Education	
	Lower	Upper	No School	Graduate Primary School and Above
		Children Ever Born		
20-24	1.7	1.8	(2.3)[1]	1.7
25-29	2.7	3.1	2.9	3.1
30-34	3.5	4.4	3.8	4.2
35-39	4.5	5.9	4.8	(6.4)
40-44	4.7	6.2	5.3	(7.2)
45-49	3.9	6.2	4.4	(4.7)
50-54	5.2	6.1	5.7	*
		Children Still Living		
20-24	1.4	1.7	(2.0)	1.5
25-29	2.4	3.0	2.4	2.9
30-34	2.5	4.0	3.0	3.7
35-39	3.7	5.2	3.9	(5.8)
40-44	3.4	5.2	4.0	(6.2)
45-49	2.5	4.9	2.9	(4.1)
50-54	3.2	4.7	3.8	*

Note: 1. Parentheses denote fewer than 30 cases.

* = Fewer than 10 cases.

and post partum abstinence is considerably shorter. For example, among women aged 35 and over, the average duration of abstinence following a live birth was 15.9 months for women with no schooling and 9.7 months for primary school graduates. The average for lower-income women was 19.4 months, as compared to 12.9 months for upper-income respondents. Among younger women, the length of abstinence is shorter, but social class differences persist. Statements from middle-class women indicated the increasing tendency to disregard a taboo on intercourse during breastfeeding, and a tendency to believe that long periods of abstinence are harmful both physically and to the marriage. A well-educated wife of a village official, for example, stressed that sex was an important biological need and that a man should never be forced to seek gratification outside of marriage. This contrasts with a view of many lower class couples who either felt that both partners could abstain, or that the husband was free to go to a prostitute. In fact abstinence has a high positive value in traditional Javanese culture, and it is held that refusing food, sleep or sex increases one's spiritual strength. There is very little research on the sexual life of married couples in Java, and it would be a valuable contribution to investigate this topic, particularly in the context of class differences in the marriage relation as described earlier.

At the time of the Maguwoharjo study, the family planning program in Java was just beginning on a large scale. Although the total number of women who had accepted family planning at that stage was very small, acceptors tended to be concentrated among middle-class, educated women. It is too early to evaluate whether this will be a sustained trend in Maguwoharjo or whether it simply reflects the fact that high parity women are usually the first to become acceptors, and it is the middle class which has the higher fertility. It may also be related to the approach of the government fieldworkers, which is more suited to educated women (T. Hull 1973). In general, however, the potential impact of family planning is extremely important, particularly in the middle class where fertility is less constrained by marital disruption or fecundity impairments, and where

women are more reluctant to practice prolonged abstinence. It remains to be seen whether family planning can work to reduce family size in the middle class, at least down to the level of the four or five children which they express as their ideal. Family planning can play an important role in spacing children, particularly among younger educated women who, though they are marrying later, tend to have births closer together.

In the section concerning female work activities, we mentioned the strong middle-class condemnation of "working mothers." This attitude accords with many other statements about motherhood and techniques of childrearing which emphasize the skills and challenges involved in raising children. The village head who, as we mentioned earlier, forbade his wife to work also would not allow her to hire servants because he felt that his children should be taught only by their mother and not be influenced by lower-class servants. A secondary school graduate and wife of an Air Force officer, expressed quite frankly what is a prevalent attitude among middle-class women: she felt that lower-class children are not raised properly and do not receive love and attention from their mothers who are always out working. Even though she lives in a village, she continued, she and her husband want to bring up their children "the way city people do."

While these attitudes do not, in theory, conflict with the goals of the government's family planning program--emphasis on being a good mother does not mean having a lot of children--in practice these ideas seem to sanction the large family sizes found in the middle class, and also seem to reinforce the existing ideal family size of four or five children. Because there is such strong social support for the maternal role, and a marked lack of meaningful alternative roles, it will be extremely difficult to inculcate a norm for a two-child family, or more fundamental changes such as increases in the proportion of women never marrying or bearing children.

Conclusions: Some Observations on Changes in the Position of Women

In comparison to the situation in some developing (and developed) countries, rural women as a group in Java would seem to be in a favorable position to participate in and benefit from their country's development efforts. Traditionally they have been active in economic roles outside the household, have held a strong place in the management of the household and decision-making within the family, have had considerable freedom of movement, and are not thought of as being ignorant or incompetent vis-à-vis men. As in most societies, however, these patterns varied even traditionally according to social class. Among the Javanese nobility, many of the marks of high social status involved restrictions on the freedom of women, both physical freedom of movement as well as participation in non-domestic matters.

Based on many of the characteristics of middle-class women in Maguwoharjo just described, it may be asked to what extent does the "new" middle class exhibit the same tendencies noted in the traditional status hierarchy. Are education and other vehicles of modernization helping to create a rural elite in which women will be less prepared to participate in development? Is the experience of formal education and contact with Western ideas in fact associated with women becoming more dependent economically on their husbands, in becoming more oriented toward the nuclear family rather than a wider network of female kin and non-kin, in taking on many of the characteristics of urban life in their consumption patterns, in having larger family sizes because of freedom from traditional restrictions on fertility, in placing great emphasis on the maternal role and condemning working roles for mothers? Such questions need to be investigated in greater detail. And the extent to which changing patterns among the middle class actually do represent "progress" or "regress" in relation to overall development goals and to the specific integration of women into the development process also needs to be evaluated.

Research is specifically needed concerning both formal and informal education for women--and men--in contemporary Indonesia, both in terms of specific content, such as the role images of women which are projected, and also in terms of overall orientation. In general, it seems that the education system is geared to preparing people for civil service positions in towns and cities: a rural woman with a high school education feels she has no realistic goals or opportunities in the village. It is also clear, however, that there are not enough jobs even in the cities to absorb all the graduates of the school system. It is not surprising then to find that there was a prevailing attitude among middle-class Maguwoharjo women that the only real justification for the education of young girls is to prepare them to be better mothers.

It is interesting to note that the generally acknowledged founder of the Indonesian Women's Movement, Raden Adjent Kartini, also seemed to share this opinion about the function of education for women. The daughter of a Javanese noble, she opposed the customs of her social class by promoting more freedom for women, and in 1902 founded a small school for girls. However, we find in a published collection of her letters the following statement:

> If we demand education and instruction for girls . . . it is not that we want them to compete with men . . . but . . . to render them more capable of fulfilling the great task which Mother Nature has entrusted to them: mother . . . (Vreede de Stuers 1960:54).

Her education campaign was limited primarily to the daughters of high-born Javanese, where it served to get these women out of their home "prisons." However, the training they received was oriented toward their future domestic roles. The aims of many women's organizations and publications in the early 20th century were also directed to "the improvement of the woman's position by means of education in household practices, dressmaking classes, courses in child welfare, and so forth" (Vreede de Stuers 1960:64). In fact, if we look at

today's development programs aimed specifically at women, the emphasis seems little changed.

We cannot of course deny that most women are in fact wives and mothers and that programs in nutrition, child and maternal health, and other family-oriented matters are certainly an important part of development goals. However, we must evaluate whether, in emphasizing these aspects, we are ignoring the role of women in economic activities outside the home. If education is to be oriented toward a more dynamic and egalitarian rural environment, it should not make women look disparagingly upon traditional female economic activities.

It is the urban middle class who plan education and development programs, who form the membership of the major women's organizations, and who are the leaders of the women's movement. It is not surprising then, that the values which emerge from these organizations accord quite naturally with the rural middle-class attitudes we have been describing. An example which seems to best summarize the situation comes from the government-sponsored Family Welfare Education program, which is the major program currently involved with rural women. This organization posts a sign in each village neighborhood unit which illustrates their ideals in a list of the five major roles or "duties" of a woman. They are:

1. Producer of the nation's future generations
2. Wife and faithful companion to her husband
3. Mother and educator of her children
4. Manager of the household
5. Citizen

In some cases the order is slightly changed, with "wife" and "mother" preceding "producer of the nation's future generations." But in no case have I seen "citizen" in anything but last place. Perhaps we will not be able to say that women are truly being integrated into development programs and that their valuable potential is being realized until their role as "citizen" moves up at least a notch or two on the list.

NOTES

1. See Firth (1966) for a similar consideration of the economic self-reliance of Malay women as a facilitating factor in divorce decisions.

Chapter Seven

WOMEN AND MEN IN ILOILO, PHILIPPINES: 1903-1970

M. Christina Blanc Szanton

Introduction

It is often suggested that the role of women in Southeast Asian societies does not easily fit models built from European or African data. Goldschmidt and Michaelson (1971), examining a world-wide sample of 46 peasant communities found that relative to the rest of the world, the Southeast Asian cases--mostly Thai and Burmese--showed remarkably few signs of machismo or general cultural expectations of male dominance, while they were marked by bilateral inheritance and strong female economic presence and control. They conclude by noting that aside from certain ritual and social disabilities, Southeast Asian women seem to have quite considerable decision-making powers.

Other recent articles, all agreeing on the relatively equal domestic role of women in Southeast Asia have attempted to relate its origin to either women's role in wet-rice agriculture (Moore 1973), or to the relatively weak patri-centered influences (legal, political and economic), emanating from the local states (Goldschmidt and Kunkel 1971). Still more recently, Winzeler (1974a and b) both rejected and reversed Moore's hypothesis, arguing that the late appearance and unstable character

of Southeast Asian states (Geertz 1960 and 1968), derived from the pre-existing bilateral kinship system, which did not favor the concentration and perpetuation of authority.

This paper represents an initial effort to examine changing male/female relationships in one Southeast Asian country, the Philippines, drawing on the occupational data in the unusually reliable 1903 and 1970 national censuses for the central Philippine province of Iloilo. However, in order to set this material in context, we will first examine some of the general patterns of male/female relations during the pre-colonial, Spanish, American and Independence periods.

For the purposes of this paper, the major theoretical concerns are: (1) the differential access of men and women to social, and especially, occupational roles; (2) their differential control over resources, both within the family (domestic) and outside the family (social); (3) the extent to which these constellations of relationships have changed over time; and (4) the impact of socio-economic level or class on these phenomena. Papanek (1976) has recently offered a programmatic statement emphasizing the importance of some of these variables and Stoler (1977) has presented a useful rural Indonesian case-study.

In this general context, we will examine Sacks' hypotheses (1975:232-234): (1) that ruling classes tend to select men as social laborers; while (2) industrializing capitalist states tend to incorporate poorer women into social production but institutionalize inequality through pay differentials. We will also utilize elements of the models elaborated by Mintz (1971), Bossen (1975), and Rogers (1975) to help illuminate specific aspects of the changing relationships between men and women in the Philippines.

Both Mintz and Bossen, for example, are concerned with the extent of women's access to modern occupations, as well as to training and technology. Mintz focuses more narrowly on the diminishing importance of women's

formerly essential economic roles (e.g., local trade), in modernizing capitalist countries in Africa, and the Caribbean. Bossen is generally concerned with the less structurally valued roles that the "new opportunities" of "modernization" often seem to reserve for women. Rogers, on the basis of research in a French peasant village, discusses the changes in the previously balanced mutual interdependence of male and female roles brought about by shifts in locale (from village to urban area), and/or occupation (from farming to wage labor). She also stresses that the opportunities for female solidarity and extra-domestic informal participation which characterize the village--despite, or perhaps because of, the myth of male dominance--are often lost in the urban setting where women's roles are less significant, where the basis of their interdependence with men is transformed, and where women are often left relatively powerless. Her conclusions point to concerns about the changed significance of domestic labor in advanced capitalism and the intersection of gender and class (Bujra 1979). They also emphasize the need for detailed research on those same issues, and more generally, on the changing roles of men and women in specific historic situations in third world countries, in order to better evaluate the significance of her generalizations.

Finally, since the data base is often sketchy and speculative, we will not attempt definitive conclusions, but rather suggest both a potentially useful modification of Sacks' hypotheses and propose some important areas for further research.

Many people have helped in the construction of this analysis, but I am particularly grateful to Dr. Peter Smith for numerous clarifications regarding methodological issues related to the Philippine censuses, and also for suggesting productive lines of future research.

The Pre-Spanish Period

Early reporters and historians usually describe the Visayan (and Tagalog) people of the Philippines in pre-Spanish and early Spanish times as having a social

system composed of ranked categories of people, from dominant to dependent. While dominant status is described somewhat confusedly as being at times achieved, at times hereditary, dependent status appears to have been largely inherited through either mother or father, or both, and could over time, create for individuals a wide array of work-demanding superiors (Phelan 1959: 20-22).

If one examines the relationship between the sexes as described at the time against Sacks' indices of status (Sacks 1975:223), Philippine society appears to have been relatively egalitarian and non-discriminatory. In the domestic sphere, Philippine women had the right to equal inheritence from their parents, an equal share of property held in common at a husband's death, and half of any compensation received if a husband was murdered. The other half went to the children (Infante 1969:107). In case of divorce, each parent was entitled to half the number of children regardless of whether they were boys or girls (Infante 1969:123). Both husband and wife had the right to divorce or to separation (which was apparently relatively common). In the case of a wife's infidelity, a Visayan husband might repudiate her and take all of her possessions as a punishment, which suggests that they were indeed probably considered as hers (Infante 1969:67).

The wife's authority over domestic affairs, though not clearly spelled out in the few available texts, appears to have been substantial also. Sexually, women enjoyed considerable freedom during their adolescence and were apparently encouraged in this by their mothers. After marriage, Visayan women in particular struck the fancy of the Spanish, many commenting on the elaborate metal contraptions that women asked their husbands to attach to their penises in order to increase the women's sexual gratification (Blair and Robertson 1903-09, 5:117).

Women's participation in the extra-domestic social realm is often unclear and rarely mentioned in the literature. Theoretically, women could inherit a chieftainship, but they rarely seem to have done so. To the great surprise of the Spaniards they were sometimes sent by

their husbands to deal with Spanish officials (Blair and Robertson 1903-09, 40:248). Women in the Visayas were also the major mediators (*babaylan*) with the supernatural. Their daily occupations, though only very occasionally mentioned in the texts, seem to have involved weaving mats and cloths and during early Spanish times also involved acting as local traders (Blair and Robertson 1903-09, 40:149-150; Robles 1969:90).

This early historical data on sex roles, based mostly on early Spanish travel logs and diaries, cited by Blair and Robertson, Phelan, etc. must be utilized with great care. It is limited in substance since the same situation may be used repeatedly by different modern authors. In addition, the sexist (and religious) biases of the early writers no doubt affected their choice of subject matter and influenced their views either by encouraging them to stress the freedom of Philippine women (in contrast with the restrictions imposed on Spanish women at the time) or to infer the women's independent status (for lack of information).

Keeping these considerations in mind, one can generally conclude that on the basis of the sketchy and limited sources presently available, a relatively undiscriminated participation of women in the domestic realm as well as to some extent in the social realm seems to characterize the pre-Spanish period.

The Spanish Period

Upon arrival in the Philippines, the Spanish found scattered independent settlements of 30 to 2000 families with local chieftains (Phelan 1959:15-28). After the Spanish conquest in 1571, one of the first major political efforts was to attempt to concentrate the largely scattered populace into towns and villages, usually around a church (or chapel) and a community hall. Their success varied from region to region but, in Iloilo, it was never very great. By 1903, still only some 22% of the population lived in towns. (Again in 1970, only 25% were town residents.)

In contrast to Mexico, only a relatively small number of Spaniards were ever physically present in the Philippines, and in consequence, there was a relative lack of intermarriage and mestization. However, despite their small numbers, the impact of the Spanish in the country was substantial (Frank 1969), though their subtle cultural and sexually discriminatory influences seem to have been greatest in the few urban centers where the Spanish concentrated, rather than in the dispersed population of the countryside.

Education. The education provided Filipinos by the Spanish regime was severely limited by sex and socioeconomic status. From the beginning, the religious orders organized church schools in the rural areas to train elites as intermediaries between the few Spaniards and the largely rural populace. Filipino sacristans taught prayers and catechism on Sundays, and reading, writing, etc., during the week to a selected few. The quality of this instruction varied considerably over time, following the political concerns of the Spaniards, and over space, by religious order and by density of population. "The Augustinian parishes in Ilocos and the Visayas were probably the worst instructed in the islands, for in addition to the mediocre quality of the clergy, there was widespread decentralization" (Phelan 1959:60).

Though the Spanish Crown originally encouraged the clergy to preach and teach in the native languages to facilitate the transition to Christianity, during the 17th century the "Indios" were encouraged to become bilingual, and by the 18th century, strong efforts were made to compel them to use Spanish for a variety of doctrinal and political reasons. For example, native languages were not considered to be sufficiently well-developed to transmit the mysteries of the Catholic creed and to facilitate abandonment of pagan idolatries and superstitions (Phelan 1959:58, 131). Also, within a few years from the initial conquest Filipino Sanskrit-based syllabaries were replaced by the Western alphabet, over time inhibiting, and in most cases, ultimately destroying artistically elaborate local literary

traditions (Alzina 1610-1674). Numerous Spanish terms were gradually incorporated into local languages, including Hiligaynon, the major language of the province of Iloilo. But at the same time formal Spanish-speaking school teachers remained rare and students even scarcer. And the formal prohibition of those who could not speak, read and write Spanish from elected public office, was rarely enforced. In the middle of the 19th century, the Spanish regime made a major political effort to establish free compulsory primary education in each village, on a Cuban model (Robles 1969:221), but the impact of formal Spanish education and Spanish language never became very great. By 1903, less than 10% of the population spoke Spanish and only 20.2% of the adult population (over 10 years of age) could read and write in any language (Census II:177 ff.)

Discrimination by sex in education was very strong throughout the Spanish regime. By the middle of the 19th century, there were in Manila five institutions for secondary and higher instruction for men, but only two for women, and the latter taught primarily selected women's subjects (Robles 1969:155, 221). The Spanish educational reforms of 1863 somewhat improved the situation for women, and thus by 1903, the population under 20 years of age showed somewhat more equal literacy by sex than the older generations. But in Iloilo Province, for example, only 10% of the female population could read, or write, or both, in comparison with 25% of the men (Census 1903, 2:85 ff.) In general, low levels of education, marked by discrimination by sex and socio-economic background, characterized the country as a whole.

Politics. The impact of Spanish colonial government was to crystallize pre-conquest Philippine society into something approaching a class structure. First, the elite (*principales*) was recruited as an economic intermediary to draw through tribute and taxes the material demands of the Spaniards from the productive capacities of the general populace (Phelan 1959:120). Secondly, in the rural areas, the same elite became the political leaders (first through election, then through appointment), the legal magistrates and even religious leaders (sacristans),

often shifting from one position to another. In order to hold such offices, men usually had to be wealthy and be able to face emergencies, tax stealing, and sudden demands from the Spaniards (Robles 1969:85). And finally, having provided them with education, the Spaniards reinforced the nearly hereditary political positions of the elite by introducing land ownership, which gave the opportunity of appropriating for themselves lands which were formerly communally owned (Phelan 1959:117-118). According to Phelan (1959), pre-conquest usufruct of land became, with the Spanish regime, titles held in fee simple (inheritance and alienable by individuals) and in fee tail (royal domain assigned to Filipinos and inherited, but alienable only upon Crown's consent and revertable to the Crown if not cultivated). These laws, however, were unevenly enforced and the lack of organized registrations created much confusion (Larkin 1972:71-72). Still, the elite's right to "grab" land and keep it, was certainly encouraged and sustained by the Spanish regime. The extent to which this opportunity was available to women as well remains unclear, but appears unlikely.

Discrimination by sex for access to political office was considerable. The Spaniards, primarily men from a Southern European culture that stresses the political role of males and the domestic role of females, undoubtedly found it easier to choose men over women as leaders of local communities, thereby reinforcing the prior tendency towards greater male participation in politics. Thus, the eligible voters for local officials, when there were elections, were only married men and the early accounts only refer to officials with male Spanish titles (Phelan 1959:125).

In addition, a new standard of pre-marital and marital morality was created by modifying important aspects of customary law (Plasencia 1589; Smith 1973). For example, the Spanish prohibited bride gift and bride price on the mistaken notion that they constituted sales. Later, they increasingly imposed Roman law (Phelan 1959: 129-133). The result was frequent cases of discrimination by socio-economic background and sex, and for most purposes, the social status of a woman was determined by her husband's and she was without influence on the status of her children (Robles 1969:77).

Economics. Women's control of land and rights to bilateral inheritance were also curtailed by the imposition of Roman law. Unfortunately, given currently available materials, it is difficult to document the intent, or changes in, women's contributions to family budgets or participation in trade. At least according to Colin, in 1663, Visayan women were "shrewd traders" of their weaving, needlework, and embroideries, and the 1902 Gazetteer of the Philippine Islands describes rural women all over the country as selling agricultural produce in open municipal markets. Carroll (1963) and Wickberg (1964) also describe rural women as subsistence traders in the 19th century. However, the role of Filipino or Chinese mestizo women in large-scale local or inter-island trade was probably limited to helping their Chinese or Chinese mestizo husbands until those local distribution roles became available to both Filipino men and women at the turn of the century (Wickberg 1964; Loney 1964).

In conclusion, by the end of 400 years of Spanish rule, men seem to have become relatively more politically active and were engaged in productive activities (usually farming) while Filipino women were fairly constrained in the home, though still ocasionally showing an enterprising nature. The Spanish-engendered constraints were particularly potent among urban or wealthier women as exemplified by lives of Spanish mestizas in Iloilo described by Loney (1964), or in Jose Rizal's classic *Noli Me Tangere*. In the countryside, women probably remained somewhat more independent.

The Modern Period

The Filipino revolution against Spain and the subsequent American intervention and takeover (1898-1901), engendered rapid and fundamental changes to the Philippines. An educational and political revolution occurred in the following decades and certain economic trends that had started in the middle of the 19th century were accelerated. Although World War II, the Japanese occupation (1941-1944), and subsequent Philippine political independence (1946) created many discontinuities, we will here attempt to describe some general continuing trends

in the social, political and economic life of the entire period 1903-1970.

Education. As early as 1901, the American regime began to organize a highly centralized public school system throughout the country, with English as the medidium of instruction. Six hundred teachers were brought from the U.S. and several trade schools, as well as the University of the Philippines, had been created by 1908 (Agoncillo and Guerrero 1970). In contrast to the Spanish educational effort, this new system was very much aimed at mass education, and was not sexually discriminatory. Unfortunately, it had the effect of deeply Americanizing and colonializing the Filipinos (Constantino 1966). After Philippine Independence in 1946, aside from shifting language instruction up to the third grade to the local vernaculars (then over to English, as before), the new government essentially retained the American educational system and continued to give it high priority. Thus, from 1960 to 1970, 30% to 37% of the national government budget was spent on education, far more than in any other country in Southeast Asia (Myrdal 1968:1663). And by 1970, the literacy rates of the total Philippine population had jumped to almost equal rates for both men and women:

	1903	1970
female	11	82
male	30	85

Because of high demand, and the rapidly increasing population, private high schools and colleges came to be operated as highly profitable businesses, and covered both Manila and the provinces. By 1970, Iloilo City contained 10 colleges, 4 universities and many high schools and vocational schools while each of the province's 46 municipalities had at least one public high school, often one or more private ones, and well over half of its barrios had local elementary schools. Education had become big business and an ever-expanding bureaucracy, but it was equally open to men and to women.

Politics. In the political realm, the most significant change relevant to our concerns was the gradual removal of sexual discrimination in voting eligibility. It was, however, a slow and elite-oriented process. The 1903-1905 Municipal Code allowed only the wealthy and/or the literate in English or Spanish to vote, thus eliminating 97% of the population and all but a very few women (Cullinane 1971:65). Over time, however, the eligibility requirements eased, and higher educational levels allowed more and more people to vote. By 1970, all adult citizens could vote.

The American colonial administration was characterized by powerful elitist tendencies despite declared commitments to implant democratic government. Michael Cullinane notes:

> Quite often the Americans found themselves elaborating the evils of elite rule in the Philippines while at the same time allowing such rule to become firmly implanted through their association with and their dependence on the *illustrados* (intellectuals) and the local *principalia* (elite) (1971:15).

Self-government at the municipal and provincial level thus often meant elitist rule, thanks to their access to the vote.

Political participation was to have been primarily a concern of men, as it had been in Spanish times. Even in 1970, though not legally barred from political roles, women only occasionally entered political office. At the village level, there were few female barrio captains, mayors, and vice-mayors; and the handful of female senators, and congressmen at the national level were almost invariably from or backed by powerful elite families. Women of substantial economic power often stood behind, indeed even built, the political thrones of their male kinsmen. But only more rarely did they take office themselves.

In our field research site, a central Philippine fishing town, for example, both major political factions were informally headed and funded by women who sponsored

alternatively their own brothers, sons, and nephews to play the major public political roles. These influential women had practically complete control over the economic resources of their family group and made many of the decisions in both the economic and the political spheres. Their powerful role was readily acknowledged in the town (Szanton 1981). The importance of family politics without, however, particular emphasis on the role of women has also been stressed in other research on lowland Philippine towns (Murray 1973; Machado 1974).

More in-depth research is obviously needed to fully evaluate women's changing participation in political office, both at present and over time, since, to date, most social science writing on the Philippines has tended to discuss such social variables asexually. Women's generally limited participation in formal political roles, with only a few notable upper-class exceptions, still remained striking in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Economics. At the domestic level, Filipino women today often have a strong hold on the family budget and economic standing. Though there are undoubtedly some differences by socio-economic level, women regularly handle extra-domestic economic decisions for the family, such as money lending and borrowing, buying and selling family property, and acting as treasurer and decision-maker in family businesses. The limits and implications of these patterns over time require further research.

At the national level, generally ineffective agricultural policies over the 1903-1970 period have left the agricultural sector relatively undeveloped (Power 1975), and have generally supported the older elites (Owen 1971). In Iloilo province, for example, land reform has never gained much headway, and tenancy rates show a steady increase from 5-10% in 1903, to approximately 50% in 1970 (D. Szanton 1970). To the extent that women owned land, these elitest tendencies fit them so well.

At the same time, U.S. tariff policies favored the production of relatively unprocessed agricultural

commodities with consequences for Philippine society. Sugar and copra, for instance, shaped (and confined) the rapid development of Iloilo City as an international storage point and deepwater port between 1900 and World War II. The continuing stress on, and market for, agricultural exports did not foster the development of other (non-U.S.) markets for less favored items. Thus, while early in the period, craft goods such as weaving, embroidery and pearl buttons, largely produced by women, were important exports, they rapidly lost significance as American trade policies took hold. The emphasis on agricultural export products in effect fostered the growth of agricultural labor but did little to encourage the development of a skilled labor force, male or female (Power 1975; Stine 1966).

In the general area of labor, conditions in the Philippines at the turn of the century were repeatedly described as "miserable" by the U.S. Commission reports. Early American period labor laws stressed unionization, minimum wages, limited working hours, and better working conditions. However, these laws were very differentially enforced (Stine 1966), and more often than not, were discriminatory against women.

In farm and domestic labor, outside of plantation crops, labor regulations were rarely implemented at all. Unionization in the rural areas--aside from a brief pre-World War II interlude--still remains effectively non-existent (Stine 1966; Ramos 1976; personal observations), and large wage differentials between men and women are the standard practice. As a result, the 1939 and 1960 Censuses both showed men paid twice as much as women in agricultural and domestic labor, even taking into account differences in time allotments (Stine 1966:90-91; Sison 1963).

In the few areas in which unionization was relatively strong--among wage workers in sugar and tobacco, among dock workers, drivers and conductors, and cigar and cigarette workers--the unions still rarely represented more than a small fraction of the relevant work force, and rarely included women (Montiel et al. 1976:32). Only in some of the more modern pre-war industries such as mining

and lumbering, and certain luxury goods industries that have developed in the 1960s in the Manila area (e.g., auto assembly) have there been relatively better working conditions--for the primarily male work force (Stine 1966:131).

On the other hand, the now rapidly developing electronics, toys, and textile industries in the Philippines (and elsewhere in Southeast Asia) have been utilizing young unmarried women as a cheap, expendable and docile work force. They are taking small but increasing numbers of somewhat educated unemployed young women from low income backgrounds--often the major hope for mobility of their families--for non-unionized jobs very poorly covered by national labor regulations (Grossman 1979). Specifically female occupations that have boomed since WWII, such as prostitution linked to military bases and tourism, have hardly solved the problem. However, the full extent of discrimination against females in various occupations still needs to be carefully assessed by extensive and systematic research.

Turning to commerce, increased entry into the international market and the increased importance at the national level of local, mostly agricultural exports, and foreign, mostly manufactured imports, have created a variety of opportunities for middlemen at all levels of society. These opportunities in wholesale and to a lesser extent in retail trade were, however, largely captured since the turn of the century by Chinese male immigrants (Owens 1971:106; B. Szanton 1972). A preference for dealing with male business partners by both Western and Japanese firms may well be favoring the entry of Filipino and Chinese males in some of the modern trade, but women, long active as small-scale traders, have continued to compete with Filipino males and local Chinese traders for both local distribution roles and for some of the newly available business opportunities. The outcome of that competition is still unclear.

Law. In the legal domain, the introduction of a new Civil Code by the Americans, replacing the Roman Code with its considerable sexual biases used by the Spanish, returned to Filipino women many legal rights

which they had had in the pre-Spanish period. Women reacquired formal control over property brought in at marriage as well as over property owned in common. They also obtained fully equal inheritance rights. Legal separation, but not divorce, was allowed apparently on equal grounds for both spouses (Fox 1963). What should be stressed, however, is that there has been very little systematic research on actual on-the-ground practices in this area, either before or after the introduction of the new Civil Code. It is, therefore, difficult to speak firmly of the Code's real impact on male/female relations. On the basis of my own observations in Iloilo, I would hypothesize that during both the pre-Spanish and post-Spanish periods, legal enforcement of property and marriage laws was stronger among the urban and higher socio-economic levels who more readily used or misused--legal channels than among the rural residents and lower socio-economic strata where formal channels were regarded as unreliable and unfamiliar. The change in code would then have been particularly advantageous precisely for women in those higher socio-economic levels.

Thus, in general, the early 20th century brought both sexes increased educational, political and occupational opportunities, and it removed some of the formal legal constraints Spain had imposed on women. It witnessed an accelerated penetration in the country of an internationally oriented market economy, with substantial consequences throughout the society. It also saw, however, the continuation of the elitist dominance that characterized the Spanish period. In fact, elitist tendencies were reinforced in several ways, applying differential constraints on the development of various sectors of the population.

Occupational Change in Iloilo 1903-1970

As one means of examining these changing relationships between men and women in greater detail, and in a particular locale, we turn now to data on occupational distributions from the unusually reliable 1903 and 1970 Philippine censuses. Before proceeding, however, it must be noted that comparisons between the two censuses are complicated by conceptual and statistical shifts

which occurred between their compilation. In 1903, the work force data was based on a notion of "usual occupation," regardless of current or recent activity. Since 1956, Philippine censuses have utilized a concept of a "labor force," which involves asking people about their activities during a specific period, usually the week preceding the survey.

While the 1903 "usual occupation" approach tends to miss new participants in the work force (often women), the 1970 "labor force" type questions tend to overlook irregular (in and out) participants (again, most often women). Another, more general, problem is differentiating changes in male/female occupational distributions attributable to occupational trade-offs between men and women from overall changes in occupational structure--including differential inter-provincial migration--occurring throughout the society, for the whole period, for both sexes. Also, by examining only two points in time (1903, 1970) we are necessarily disregarding all potential fluctuations in occupational distribution by sex between those two dates. While these problems are complex and worthy of detailed historical analysis, they do not invalidate the general comparisons that follow; they merely add a degree of tentativeness to the interpretations of specific occupational shifts. The general directions of change remain clear.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 show the occupational distribution of women and men over ten years of age, in 1903 and 1970, in the central Philippine province of Iloilo. In general, there are great differences in the occupational distributions of the two sexes at the two points in time, and most important for our discussion, over the 67-year period there was dramatically more change among the women than among the men. Of the many specific points and comparisons that can be drawn from these tables, we will limit ourselves to those most central to our thesis.

The Unemployed. The term "unemployed" is being used quite generally to refer to persons who are temporarily unemployed, as well as to persons demographers usually define as not being part of the labor force,

such as students and housewives. Given the changing definitions of employment, the data simply did not lend themselves to this distinction. In addition, it is essential to note that the percentages indicated as unemployed for each sex in 1903 and 1970 are the percentages of the total population of that sex over 10 years old. In contrast, the percentages found in the employed sections of the tables are percentages of the employed persons of that sex over ten (and not percentages of the total population). Finally, it must be kept in mind that at both points in time, men outnumbered women in the national labor force by about two to one. The employed percentages, therefore, are based on populations of quite different sizes, and those cases in which women outnumber the men in absolute terms as seen in Table 4 are particularly significant.

Examining the unemployed sections of Tables 5 and 6, the most obvious contrast is the far greater proportion of women than men who are unemployed. Over the 67 years the percentage unemployed increased for both sexes, though the rate of increase for men was somewhat higher. It should also be noted that aside from these increases, the total labor force roughly doubled because of overall population growth.

It should also be noted that at least in 1970--and perhaps in 1903 as well--the difference in the percentage unemployed between men and women (27.1% versus 72.8% is fully accounted for by women characterizing themselves as "housewives" (44.6%). (The percentage of "students," or "looking for work," among men and women are quite similar.) In other words, private domestic labor has continued to absorb a very large part of the female work force.

The Employed. In 1903, crafts--almost entirely self-employed weavers working at home--accounted for an overwhelming proportion of the employed women. In 1970, weaving and crafts had drastically fallen away in significance. Those who remained--especially the weavers--were working predominantly for wages. In the place of crafts, other occupations expanded and several new occupational categories emerged that had been quite absent in 1903.

Among the significantly expanded occupations for women between 1903 and 1970 the most obvious are various forms of agricultural activity--farm operator, and family and wage farm laborer--which together rose from 2.5% of the total to 27.4%. Unfortunately, the 1903 census did not disaggregate its category "farming," though it probably did not include unpaid labor on one's own farm (see definitions in Appendix). Similarly, the 1903 category "laborer" did not specify the location of the labor. In addition, recent studies in comparable farming areas in central Luzon (Takahashi 1969 and 1972; Fegan 1972) show that female participation in farm labor--for wages or not--varies with age, marital status, and a variety of local and highly changeable economic conditions. In central Luzon villages studied by Takahashi in 1964, for example, very few housewives engaged in farm work at all, even on their own farms (Takahashi 1969: 61-62, 97), while younger women did hire themselves out for farm work (usually transplanting). By 1971, these same housewives had abandoned their crafts activities at home (weaving hats) because it no longer brought sufficient income, and the whole family generally engaged in much more farm labor on their own land, because it had become more economically rewarding (Takahashi 1972:131ff.). Other writers (for example, Castillo 1969, 1975) have generally emphasized the importance of unaccounted women's labor on family farms. Even taking these sources of uncertainty into account, the 1903-1970 growth in farm labor for wages among women represents a major structural change (even if the wages are below those given to men for comparable work).

On the other hand, it should also be noted that as Boserup (1970) has pointed out, the percentage of women in Philippine agriculture and in farm labor generally remains far below that in the other agrarian countries of Southeast Asia. To some extent, this may be an artifact of differing census definitions particularly in 1903, but the general observation does seem correct; despite the rapid growth in numbers of women on the farm in 1970, a trend apparently already noted in the 1930 Census (Resnick 1970), they still only represent a relatively small proportion--slightly more than a quarter--of the total female work force.

A similarly expanding set of wage-producing occupations for women between 1903 and 1970 were in the general areas of sales and services. As an occupational category, services rose from 7.7% in 1903 to 17.1% in 1970, and was almost entirely comprised of domestics (housekeepers, cooks, and laundresses) and beauticians, perhaps indicative of a substantial growth in (middle-class?) demand for such services. In 1903, demand for domestic services was much more limited, as the 1903 Census put it, "It is very unusual in the Philippines for women to be engaged in domestic service outside of their home (1903: 102).

The 1970 category, sales, did not exist for women in 1903. By 1970, it included 6.1% of the employed women--largely salesclerks in retail stores--again a sign of commercial (middle class?) expansion. In 1903, there were only salesmen.

Perhaps more dramatic, in terms of changing occupational structures over time and between the sexes, was the huge relative and absolute increase in women in professional, clerical and administrative jobs. In 1903, there were 981 men and 416 women in those positions. But in 1970, the women outnumbered the men 12,644 to 7,507. The figure for the men had gone up from 1.4% to 6.2% of the total, while the increase for the women was from .6% to 15.7% of the female work force. Since these occupations nearly always call for a relatively high degree of education, women at least seem to have been taking better advantage of the increased educational opportunities over the period than their male counterparts. A recent survey on "The Filipina among Filipinos" similarly emphasized the importance of the variable "education" to account for women's rates of employment (PSSC Social Science Information 1977:10).

In the category of professions, teaching is the predominant field for both sexes (accounting for 53.5% of the men and 85.2% of the women). Women are also very well-represented in the medical professions and accounting. On the other hand, though there are no legal prohibitions against them, there are few women in law, engineering or architecture.

Within the administrative occupations, which comprise 1.1% of the men and 2.2% of the women, men clearly predominate as government officials. However, the largest subcategory, supervisory and managerial activities, contains a disproportionate number of women. And at least in 1960, their earnings compared well with the earnings of men (Sison 1963:131).

Clerical occupations account for 2.2% of the men, 2,8% of the women, with the slight advantage of the women deriving from a disproportionate number of stenographers.

More generally, however, in order to qualitatively evaluate women's participation in the professional, administrative and clerical categories, one should note that there are no detailed reports of salary differentials by sex in equivalent teaching and government jobs. In fact, for 1960, women in those occupations seem to have slightly greater weekly cash earnings than men (Sison 1963). For clerical occupations, the salary situation is not known. Also, it should be noted that there are many possible discriminatory practices with regard to promotion--and thus rapidity of salary increases--such that, for example, at least in teaching, national figures for 1960-61 show that while women outnumber men in the lower echelons (including secondary schools), men predominate in collegiate, supervisory and administrative positions (Sison 1963). These differences in level and position probably account for most of the higher incomes of males in sales, upper professional and lower service positions described in a recent PSSC survey (1977:11).

On the other hand, women in the professions (e.g., medical practitioners) often earn very substantial incomes and do not appear to be economically discriminated against, though they may have fewer opportunities to complement their professional incomes with administrative government health positions. In this connection, it is interesting to note that national medical policy questions are primarily handled by the Philippine Medical Association which is only 20.6% women, while the all female Philippine Medical Women Association has generally dealt with internal professional issues (Stauffer 1966).

It would be useful to compare the number of women and men who graduate in each profession with the number who actually practice their profession over time. In 1959-60 for example, the number of nationally registered female chemists equalled that of males, and registered women dentists and pharmacists greatly outnumbered men (Sison 1963). But these relationships are not mirrored in the 1970 Iloilo data in Table 6. Such differences may well be accounted for at least in part by the high professional brain drain to other parts of the Philippines, to the U.S., and elsewhere, but clearly the issue needs further research.

Finally, since 1903, women in the professional, clerical and administrative occupations have done relatively well in Iloilo, both in total numbers and in economic standing. Subtle discriminatory practices undoubtedly exist, but they are not as blatant as the sharp wage differentials in the wage labor occupations discussed above.

Another dramatic change in this overall occupational structure involves the category, merchant. In absolute numbers, men declined in that role, 5,807 to 5,316, and as a percentage of the male work force, from 5.1% to 2.2%. In sharp contrast, the number of women rose from 1,462 to 10,100, that is, from 2.2% to 8.6% of the female work force. While the number and proportion of men in this field were declining, striking numbers of women were coming in. A qualitative evaluation of the significance of these figures however calls for more detailed data on the actual sizes of the businesses involved.

Ethnographic material tells us that in 1970 women were usually predominant in both small-scale rural trade and marketing, and in wholesale trade in the provincial rotating rural marketplaces. A detailed analysis of one Iloilo municipality (D. Szanton 1970; C. Szanton 1972) showed that women competed in about equal numbers (and with equal success) with Filipino and Chinese men in larger productive businesses as well (rice wholesaling, commercial fishing, etc.). While this appears to be the case in other small towns, it is less certain in larger towns and cities. Thus, the 1970 Census indicates that urban areas have an equal number of male and female

merchants, while in the rural areas--where the great bulk of the population is--women outnumber men, 3 to 1. In this connection, it is also interesting to note that, even among the conservative ethnic Chinese of Iloilo City (mostly shopkeepers), since WWII, there has been a steady increase in commercial enterprises independently managed by their wives and sisters (Omohundro 1973). In any event, while obviously many questions remain regarding the processes involved, and the extent to which women are relegated into lesser occupations (Mintz 1971; Bossen 1975), it certainly appears that, relative to men, women in Iloilo have so far preserved distinct advantages with regard to entry into commercial occupations and large-scale businesses.

Conclusions

Although in 1970 most women in Iloilo were still housewives, since 1903 many had in fact responded to new economic opportunities and pressures by either entering wage labor, often despite severe wage discrimination, or entering salaried, professional and business occupations, which might also involve discrimination, though of subtler sorts.

At this point, I propose that these two general sets of occupations have come to constitute two major increasingly differentiated, socio-economic sectors (SES) of Philippine society. It is true that education has often provided pathways for upward social mobility, but the more advanced schooling generally needed to reach the second set of occupations has been far more accessible for women from wealthier families (D. Szanton 1970; Bacol 1971). Likewise, intergenerational SES data suggest that the lowest 20% of the Philippine population shows practically no mobility at all (Smith 1974 and personal communication). Finally, while a number of studies have begun to outline the formation of a Philippine "middle class," the individuals or families described invariably fall into the second general occupation set. In effect, the basic two-class division of Philippine society described by Fox (1956) and Lynch (1963) remains a useful one for our purposes, though the upper segment

has probably grown in the percentage of the population it includes, and has become somewhat broadened in its occupational composition.

Looking at each segment, or class, separately, the women in the wage-earning occupations seem to be in an increasingly difficult situation. They have exchanged the flexibility of working schedule and the relative independence of part-time craftswork at home for the more rigorous schedule of wage labor, becoming simultaneously more subject to open wage discrimination by sex. Although Filipino men often help in the house, women in these occupations are still likely to have primary responsibility for marketing, cooking, washing clothes, and child-rearing. In the urban areas, many of these women will also have lost some of their prior freedom, opportunity, and time to exercise active social and political roles in the community (Rogers 1975).

On the other hand, the women in the salaried, professional or entrepreneurial occupations have gained much more. Benefiting directly from the freedom gained by the removal of the oppressive lid of Spanish cultural and legal constraints, and with education or wealth as a tool, they have rapidly entered many male roles and occupations, often reaping substantial profits and power. They may also be subject to subtler, much less blatantly oppressive, forms of sexual discrimination, which need to be researched and carefully documented. Although the line between these two groups may move slightly up or down the social hierarchy, and it is not totally impermeable, the style of life and the available opportunities on either side of it are becoming increasingly differentiated.

On the basis of African and European data, Sacks (1975) constructed a model which suggested that in pre-industrial societies, women are generally relegated to the domestic, and "defined as inadequate to public labor." However, as their societies move into an industrial capitalist stage, she argues that women are then discovered and exploited as a source of cheap labor.

In the Philippines, where male/female relations appear to have been relatively equal in the pre-colonial

period, the patri-centered Spanish regime forced a large number of "pre-industrial" constraints on the women, with some variations by socio-economic level. When these constraints were released, however, the powerful elitist policies and impact of the Spanish and American governments, together with general patterns of economic development, contributed to produce consequences for women which were strongly differentiated by sector of the population. For the women of the lower socio-economic levels, Sacks' model has largely held true. But for those women in the upper segments the relative domestic equality of Philippine women probably rooted in the bilateral kinship and inheritance systems--even though suppressed by 400 years of Spanish rule--remained resilient enough to allow them to take advantage of many new opportunities as these appeared. At the same time, the full impact of subtler forms of discrimination such as those examined by Bossen (1975) still needs to be assessed.

It would be fruitful to analyze other colonial situations using a modification of Sack's model, which clearly recognized the need for a study of women of socio-economic differentiation and class structures: different socio-cultural backgrounds and different historical patterns of colonization would no doubt reveal important insights and variations. Nonetheless, the major problem--indeed, the major vulnerability--of women most anywhere, the need to devote most of their energies to the undervalued sectors of private domestic labor and reproduction still remain, and the Philippines is nc exception.

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Table 4

Occupations of Persons 10 Years of Age and Over by Sex, 1903 and 1970
For the Province of Iloilo, Philippines

	1903		1970[1]	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
CRAFTS				
tailors, embroiderers	1,056	3,647	1,520	16,010
weavers, knitters	442	52,879	330	7,161
potters	53	136	296	379
craftsmen, production	4,234	1,735	331	3,506
millers, bakers, food	240	48	4,730	596
carpenters, furniture makers	3,931	2	15,972	1,755
electricians, electronics	(-)*	(-)*	1,302	-
plumbers, welders	(-)*	(-)*	3,423	-
bricklayers, masons	(-)*	(-)*	812	23
painters	(-)*	(-)*	767	-
chemical workers	(-)*	(-)*	752	64
furnacemen, metal makers	(-)*	(-)*	602	23
footware makers, leather	(-)*	(-)*	401	-
others (tobacco preparers, packers, compositors, bookbinders, precision instruments, etc.)	(-)*	(-)*	716	333
Totals	10,305	58,447	31,954	29,850
FARMING				
farm operators	49,812	1,612	80,532	4,619
farm wage laborers			33,730	12,646
farm family laborers	5,989	103	30,470	14,071
fisherman	(-)*	(-)*	14,925	694
loggers, forestry	3,535	20	1,610	467
herdsmen	[illegible]	9	(-)*	(-)*
florists, gardeners			(-)*	(-)*
Totals	59,[illegible]31	1,753	161,267	32,407
SERVICES				
housekeepers, maids	2,260	1,837	3,252	16,230
cooks	1,439	1,040	-	1,239
launderers	694	2,467	704	1,436
barbers, beauticians	102	-	3,025	-
firefighters	103	-		
police	1,318	-	(-)*	(-)*
watercarriers	365	-	(-)*	(-)*
musicians, music teachers	-	7	336	469
waiters, bartenders	(-)*	(-)*	893	-
building caretakers	(-)*	(-)*	1,215	762
service, sport, related work	(-)*	(-)*	250	103
others (photographers, athletes, etc.)	(-)*	(-)*		
Totals	6,308	5,351	9,675	20,233
LABOR				
laborers, stevadores	27,695	1,734	9,461	658
miners	(-)*	(-)*	728	-
Totals	27,695	1,734	10,189	658

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Table 4, Continued

	1903		1970[1]	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
TRANSPORT	2,977	1	14,061	71
SALES	438	2	8,243	7,288
MERCHANTS	5,807	1,462	5,316	10,100
PROFESSIONS				
teachers	242	129	4,015	10,777
nurses, midwives	25	279	377	1,073
physicians, dentists	138	6	398	250
artists	474	2	344	88
clergymen, sextons, welfare	102	-	361	42
accountants	(-)*	(-)*	273	112
chemists, pharmacists	(-)*	(-)*	434	158
architects, engineers	(-)*	(-)*	723	24
lawyers, jurists	(-)*	(-)*	360	-
draftsmen, technicians	(-)*	(-)*	322	95
Totals	981	416	7,507	12,644
CLERICAL				
clerical workers	484	-	3,553	1,739
bookkeepers, cashiers	(-)*	(-)*	1,462	730
stenographers, typists	(-)*	(-)*	600	834
Totals	484	-	5,615	3,303
ADMINISTRATIVE				
government officials	169	-	732	70
directors and managers	(-)*	(-)*	2,136	1,904
Totals	169	-	2,868	1,974
OTHERS (unidentified)	1,368	107	1,847	1,137
LABOR FORCE TOTAL	116,439	69,293	258,742	119,846
TOTAL POPULATION OVER 10	142,209	151,752	392,174	426,979

[1] Based on Table 2 (1970).

* Not specifically indicated. In some cases represented elsewhere but not in the province of Iloilo.

Table 5

Occupational Distribution of Women
Over Ten Years Old (Iloilo Prov.)

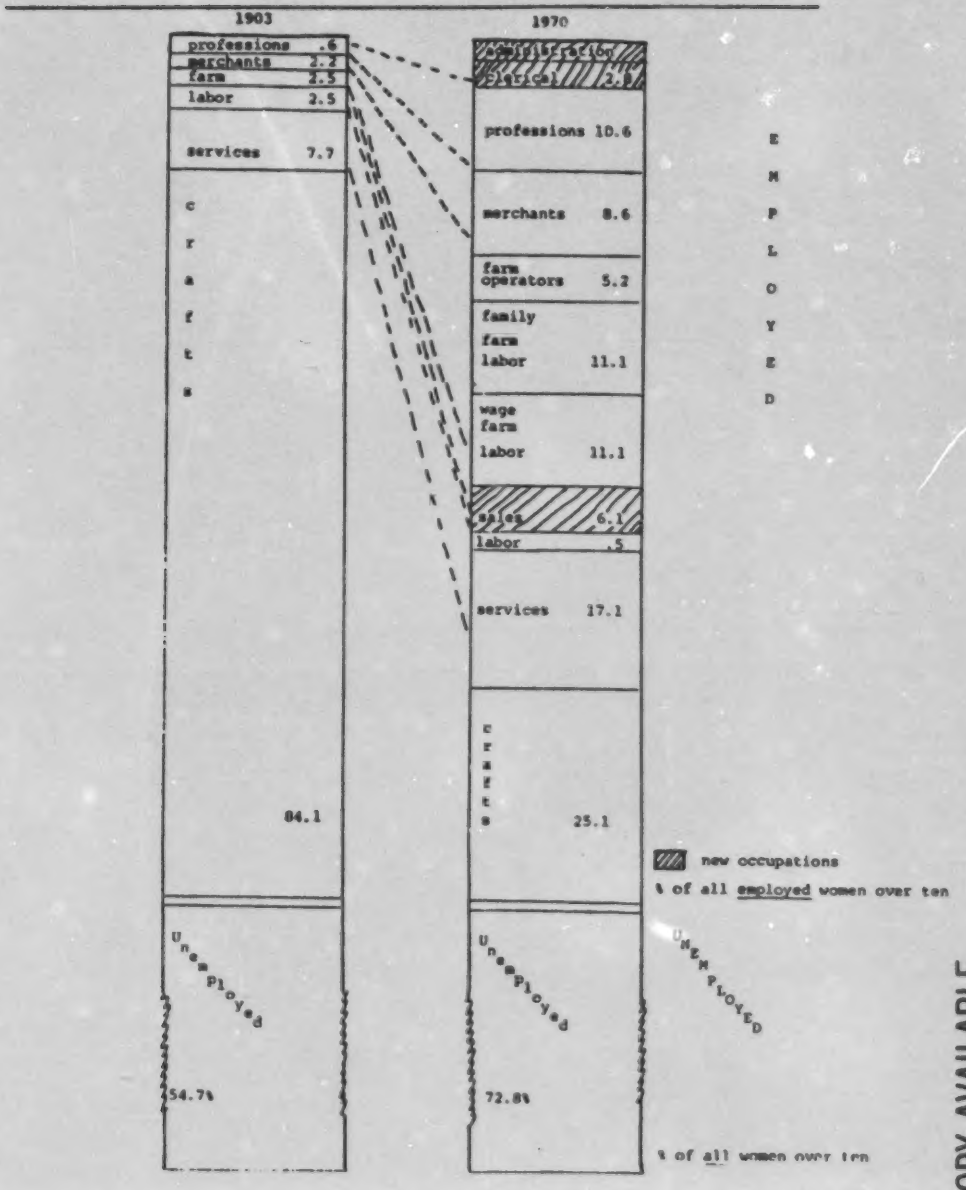

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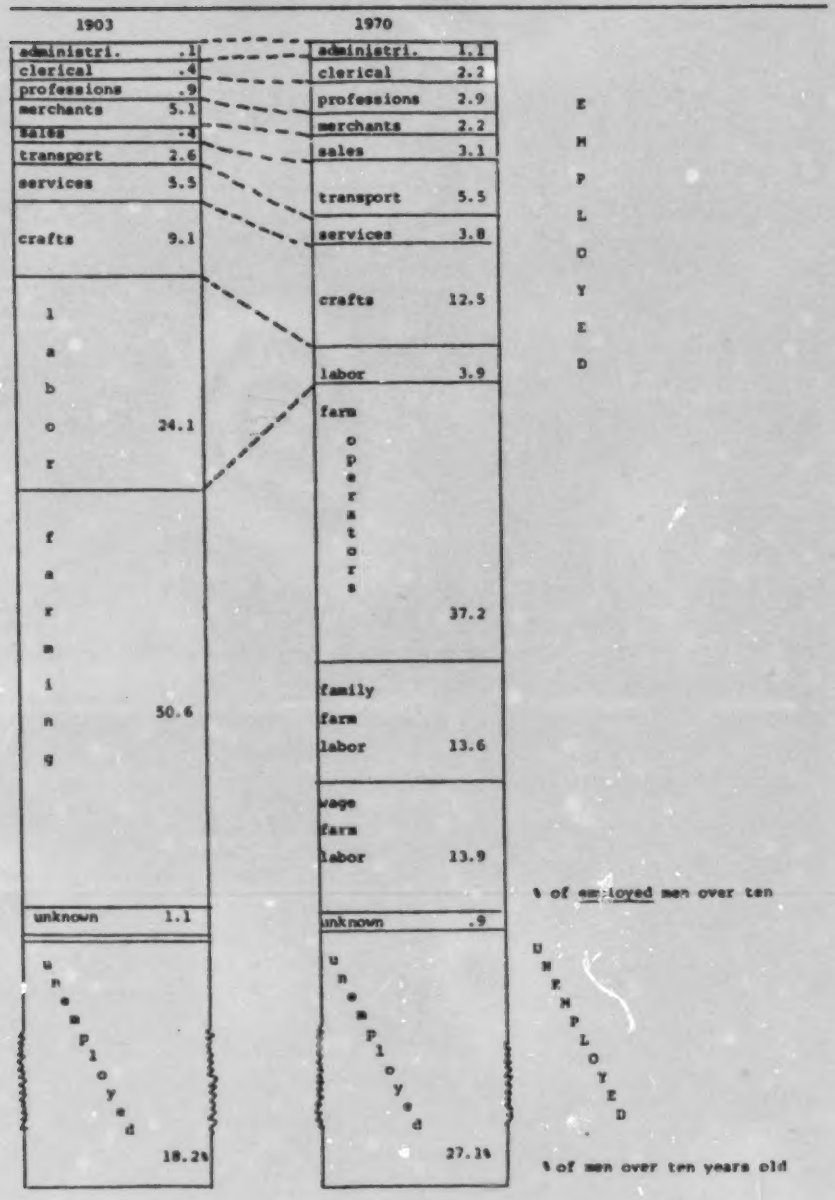
Table 6

Occupational Distribution of Men
Over Ten Years Old (Iloilo Prov.)



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APPENDIX

DEFINITIONS FROM THE 1903 AND 1970 CENSUSES

employed/unemployed

1903 "Employed" were persons engaged in gainful occupations or wage-earners. "Unemployed" included women engaged in housework, students and other dependents (p. 92ff.).

1970 "Employed" were those people who worked for pay or for profit or without pay on the family farm or enterprise either the week preceding the interview or sometime in the past ("experienced"). The totals for "employed" and "experienced" were practically identical, even in this detail.

class of worker

1903 Very little information was given on this subject aside from occasional comments, mostly about the ability of women weaving crafts at home (for cash and use) (p. 93).

1970

1. Wages and salary worker
   (a) Private employee: working for a private employer for wage, salary, commission, etc.

   (b) Government employee: working for government or government-owned or controlled operations.

2. Own business
   (a) Self-employed: working in one's business, farm, profession or trade for profit or fee, without paid employees.

   (b) Employer: working in one's business, farm, profession or trade for profit or fee, with one or more employees.

(c) Unpaid family worker: working without pay on family farm or enterprise.

urban

1970 Cities, towns of all sizes functioning as municipality centers, villages (over 1000 people) not in farming/fishing.

Chapter Eight

SEX ROLES IN THE PHILIPPINES: THE AMBIGUOUS CEBUANA

Clark D. Neher

"Sex roles" refer to the expected patterns of behavior that affect the range of action of males and females in specified positions (such as teacher, homemaker, farmer). The frame of reference for this paper is the role position of the Cebuana, not in comparison with women in other cultures, but in comparison with men in the Philippines.[1] In this paper, the roles of women of Cebu Province, a Bisayan island about 400 miles south of Manila, are assessed in terms of their role images and their educational, economic, and political activities. The conclusions validate the view of others that the role of the Filipina vis-à-vis the Filipino is ambiguous, inconsistent and contradictory.

Male and female role images are crucial to an understanding of sex roles. Societies ascribe certain characteristics to each gender, which can be positively or negatively valued. These characteristics are internalized and, accordingly, shape role patterns that affect male-female behavior differences. In patriarchal societies, women tend to see themselves as adjuncts to others, and particularly men: fathers, husbands, and sons (Iglitzin 1976:16). Moreover, in these societies, where women's role image is weak or childlike, their legal, economic, educational, and political statuses reflect that characterization.

The historical context of women's roles in the

Philippines can be summarized by noting that the pre-Spanish Filipino culture was based on a high degree of equality between men and women. This equality ended with the arrival of the Spanish whose rule for over 300 years was characterized by the subordination of women in all realms of life. The American period, from 1901 to the end of the Second World War, witnessed a return to near equality in certain spheres and a continuation of male superiority and female inferiority in other spheres.

The educational role of the Cebuana can be assessed along several dimensions including socialization and "sex-labeling" of academic fields. The policy implications of this assessment encompass the actual and potential participation of women in the labor force and the political realm and their impact on economic and political development.

Analysis of women's economic role includes employment choices, pay scales, mobility possibilities, and attitudes about female employment. Female political roles, on the other hand, can be assessed in terms of the political positions held by women, their involvement in political processes, and the attitudes expressed about women vis á vis political activity.

The literature on the Filipina and her role in various areas of life has increased extraordinarily in the last decade.[2] Empirically based studies, many rigorously carried out, have elevated discussion of the role of the Filipina from myth and speculation to verifiable, objective analysis. Nevertheless, the role of the Filipina remains ambiguous, as the many studies present contradictory conclusions. Certainly the conventional wisdom of the "dominant Filipina" has been discarded and replaced by a view of the Filipina's role as concomitantly dominant, subordinate, and equal. Hence the term "ambiguous Filipina" has arisen as scholars find her role changing depending on particular spheres of life.

Role Image

To measure sex role stereotypes in the Philippines, some 361 Cebuano respondents were asked to choose

descriptive adjectives that best fit themselves, women in general and men in general. Table 7 shows that their responses to the 18 descriptive terms indicate stereotypical views of men and women on some characteristics (at least 65 percent of both sexes) and diverse views on other characteristics.

At least 65 percent of the female respondents characterized themselves and other women as sensitive, faithful, honest, emotional, subjective, submissive, thin-skinned, dependent, gentle, and religious. Over 74 percent of the men concurred that these characteristics accurately describe the Cebuana. On the other hand, at least 60 percent of male respondents viewed themselves and other men as intelligent, leaders, aggressive, logical, religious, and competent. The great majority of women agreed with that assessment. A minority of men and women respondents (less than 30 percent) attributed the following characteristics to men: sensitive, emotional, submissive, dependent, and gentle. Similarly, a minority of men and women respondents (16 and 24 percent respectively) viewed women as leaders. Table 7 indicates that respondents were more evenly divided on the characterization of men as faithful, honest, self-confident, and competitive. Respondents were similarly split on the description of women as aggressive, logical, self-confident, ambitious, and competitive.

A parallel study of the Filipina, based on a national sample of adult women and men, asked respondents to rate various characteristics as feminine or masculine. Higher scores for males on "independent," "ambitious," and "aggressive" indicate that male and female respondents believe these are masculine characteristics. "Delicate" and "religious" were attributed to females by respondents of both sexes. These findings substantiate the general findings of the Cebu study (Gaslardo-Conaco 1977:5-1 to 5-45).

The traits assigned to men are those usually considered appropriate for the dominant sex, while the traits assigned to women are often associated with the subordinate sex (Broverman 1972:59-79). A person who is considered intelligent, a leader, aggressive, logical, and competent is more likely seen as dominant than a person

Table 7

Cebuano Role Images
(N = 361)

	Males Who Chose This Adjective to Describe: 1. Themselves 2. Men in General 3. Women in General			Females Who Chose This Adjective to Describe: 1. Themselves 2. Women in General 3. Men in General		
	N=178 1.	N=178 2.	N=178 3.	N=183 1.	N=183 2.	N=183 3.
Intelligent	62%	68%	70%	54%	60%	62%
Sensitive	22%	24%	88%	74%	86%	25%
Faithful	34%	40%	86%	88%	91%	38%
Honest	45%	43%	79%	82%	84%	51%
Emotional	20%	16%	92%	84%	81%	30%
Leader	62%	68%	16%	24%	30%	61%
Aggressive	64%	65%	41%	36%	41%	72%
Subjective (indirect)	20%	18%	94%	76%	82%	32%
Submissive	14%	16%	82%	88%	81%	24%
Logical	76%	74%	42%	55%	58%	61%
Thin-skinned	20%	24%	86%	76%	78%	42%
Self-confident	56%	61%	61%	31%	43%	52%
Ambitious	54%	55%	44%	41%	38%	52%
Dependent	23%	24%	74%	76%	76%	30%
Competitive	54%	62%	58%	48%	58%	59%
Gentle	18%	20%	83%	65%	66%	29%
Religious	64%	57%	94%	93%	95%	72%
Competent	61%	65%	59%	31%	35%	69%

who is considered sensitive, faithful, honest, emotional, subjective, submissive, thin skinned, dependent, gentle, and religious. The image of the Cebuana is congruent with the traditional view of "feminismo" in the Philippines: the desire to get married and have children, to be subordinate yet equal, beautiful, educated, and to be a companion to her husband and a mother to her children (Castillo:1976).

The traits attributed to women are interpreted by men and women as compatible with the traditional role of homemaking. In Cebu, respondents were asked to assign male or female responsibilities to various role activities. Table 8 shows that women are perceived to have responsibility for family and homemaking activities, whereas men have obligations in "livelihood" and "community leadership." These role expectations are congruent with the descriptions attributed to women, and reinforce one another. In a complementary study, Patricia Licuanan and Anna Miren Gonzales also observed that Filipino women and men want women to be loving, caring, and hardworking members of the family (Licuanan 1976).

Table 8

Which of the Following Areas of Life Are Essentially Female (Male) Responsibilities?

	Male Respondents (N=178)			Female Respondents (N=183)		
	Male Role	Female Role	Unsure	Male Role	Female Role	Unsure
Family	8%	84%	8%	6%	84%	10%
Home Management	12	76	12	12	71	17
Occupation-livelihood	92	1	7	80	12	8
Community leadership	74	8	18	64	21	25
Education	54	32	14	50	38	12

The Cebuano's role image is also determined by situational factors, i.e., demands made on the Cebuana housewife and mother which preclude assertive behavior outside the home. The average adult Filipina is the mother of six children and spends more than 29 days a month, 8 hours a day (in Cebu Province 11.1 hours a day) on housekeeping chores (Gonzales 1976:16). Her homemaking chores keep her from learning useful skills for work outside the house and assure continued dependence on her husband's salary.

In the Philippines the Constitution and the Civil Code set forth provisions that reflect the role image of a woman as a homemaker and as dependent. The Civil Code (Article 115) explicitly gives the wife the responsibility and right to manage the affairs of the household. However, Article 111 states that the husband is responsible for the support of his wife and the rest of the family. The husband is given legal sanction (Article 117) to object to his wife's working outside the home, on condition that his income is sufficient for the family and his opposition is founded on valid grounds. Article 110 states that the husband shall decide the place of residence for the family, and Article 311 notes that although both parents jointly exercise authority over their children, in cases of disagreement, the father's decision shall prevail. And despite the law providing for equal distribution of conjugal property, it is the husband who is specifically named property administrator.

A petition for legal separation may be filed for adultery by the wife or concubinage by the husband. Concubinage occurs when a man keeps his mistress over a period of time in the same house as his wife, when sexual relations take place under scandalous conditions, as in public, or when a husband lives permanently with his mistress outside of the conjugal home. However, adultery is deemed to take place with one sexual contact of a married woman with a man who is not her husband. A single extramarital act by a husband is not grounds for separation.

A woman between 21 and 23 years of age cannot leave her parents' home without their consent, except to become a wife or exercise a profession. No such restriction is

placed on males. While a husband may accept gifts from anyone, a wife cannot accept gifts without her husband's consent (Cortes 1975).

These provisions reflect the stereotypical view of the male as provider and protector and the female as dependent-subservient. The male is portrayed as dominant, as the leader, and the female is viewed as an adjunct of her husband or father. Male and female role images are thus legitimated by a discriminatory legal system that sanctions the role of the husband as dominant and the role of the wife as subordinate homemaker. In rural areas, men and women do separate (not legally) and both sexes often live with another common-law spouse. Because many of the laws are not enforced in reality the legal system may be less harsh for women than the Code suggests.

Education

In contemporary Philippine society, the majority of students at the elementary, secondary, college and graduate levels are females, suggesting that equal opportunities exist in education. Sixty percent of university students in Manila are female. Moreover, the equal literacy rates between men and women (about 82 percent) and the equal academic performances of male and female students (as shown in standardized achievement scores) attest to equal educational opportunities and abilities.

In school, girls and boys are socialized into role stereotypes. Girls tend to take courses that are traditionally female such as nutrition, nursing, and teacher training. Each of these academic areas is over 90 percent female. Males tend to engineering, law, agriculture, and technical training, although in recent years women have enrolled in increasing numbers in these academic courses.

Women are the primary socializers of young Filipinos in both the family and the school. They also have the principal responsibility for child care. Indeed, even when a wife works outside the house, husbands perform child care chores in less than 3 percent of Filipino

families (Bautista 1977:2-11). In the Philippine school system, 64 percent of teachers on all levels of education are female and in Cebu City the percentage of females in teaching is greater (Rojas-Aleta, et al. 1977:159). Thus one might hypothesize that girls have an easier time than boys in developing a sexual role identity, since women play the crucial adult role in the family and the school. (This proposition must remain tentative, however, until someone with expertise in psychology and socialization can do the relevant research.) Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to speculate that a girl's image is affected by the view of women as nurturing, home-oriented, and children-centered.

When girls do go outside the home and the school environment, they see that men dominate, whereas boys soon learn that their future role must be outside the home, in an occupation. In Cebu, the stereotyped image of the male elementary schoolteacher is that of a *bayut* (effeminate-sissy). Thus boys reject elementary teaching because it is a "feminine" role position.

In a review of elementary school basic readers used in Cebu Central School and the other public elementary schools in Cebu, women were overwhelmingly portrayed in the traditional roles of mother and housekeeper. Men were pictured as the breadwinners, involved in a multitude of jobs: engineers, taxi drivers, farmers, businessmen, doctors, scientists, soldiers, mechanics, and fishermen.

The "feature story" of the second grade reader begins:

> Mother works for the family.
> She goes to market.
> She cooks the food.
> She cleans the house.
> Mother is very busy.
> She washes the clothes.
> She takes care of the baby.
> She takes care of the other children.
> Mother takes care of Father and Children.

The story then asks, "Does your mother work? What does she do?" To help the children respond six pictures of working women are presented including a secretary, teacher,

Figure 1

Second Grade Reader: Mothers' Work

Does your mother work? What does she do?

Figure 2

Second Grade Reader: Fathers' Work

Does your father work? What does he do?

Figure 3

Third Grade Reader: Mr. Roman

The Family

Mr. Virgilio Roman is the head of the family. He goes to work. He earns a living for the family. He earns money for their needs.

As the head, Mr. Roman sets down the rules in the family. He tells the children how they should behave. He also tells them what they should not do.

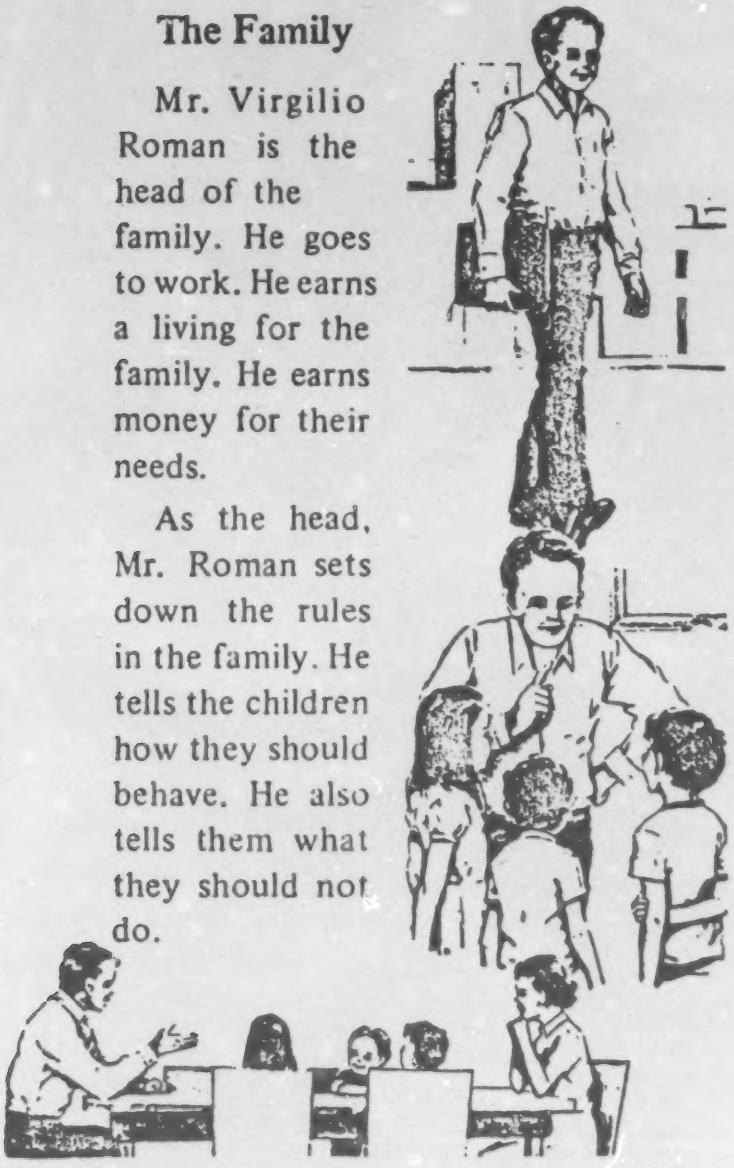
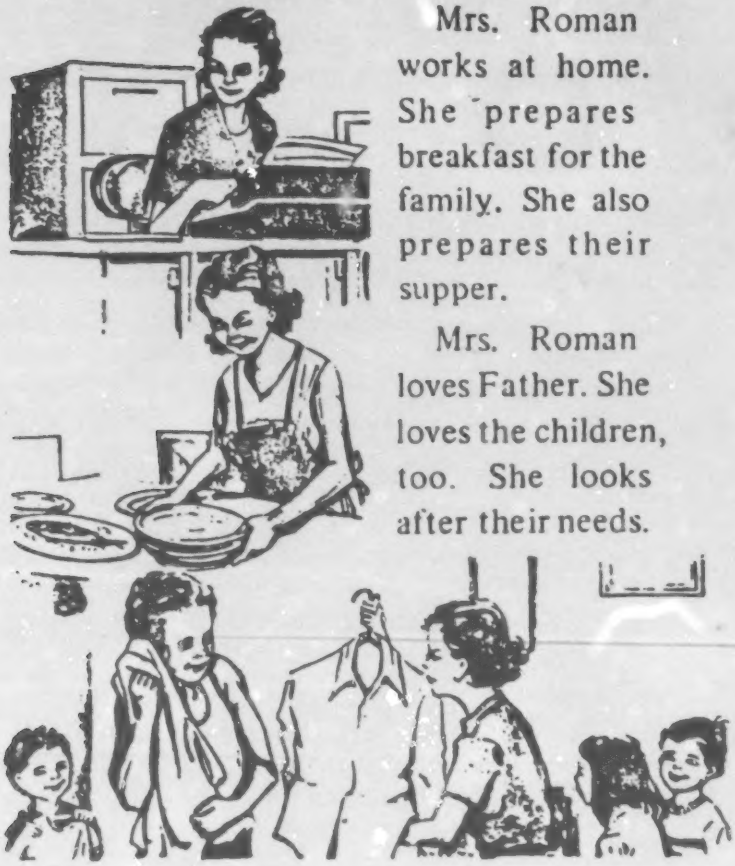


Figure 4

Third Grade Reader: Wife and Mother

Mrs. Roman is a good wife and mother. She also goes to work. She helps Mr. Roman earn a living for the family.



Mrs. Roman works at home. She prepares breakfast for the family. She also prepares their supper.

Mrs. Roman loves Father. She loves the children, too. She looks after their needs.

Figure 5

Third Grade Reader: Keeper of Rules

Mrs. Roman sees to it that the family rules are obeyed. She reminds the children of things they should do. She calls their attention whenever they misbehave.

Mrs. Roman sets the rules for the maid. She teaches the maid what to do. She also helps the maid whenever she can.

seamstress, nurse, cook, and beautician.

In a third grade reader, "Mr. Virgilio Roman" is introduced as the head of the family and the breadwinner. Mrs. Roman supplements the family income as a secretary; the household chores are shared by her and a maid. A son, Lito, is shown helping his mother and father sweep the yard, water the plants, feed the pets, and play with the younger children. Mila, a daughter, helps her mother clean the house, wipe the chairs and the table, and care for the babies. She also sets the table and washes the dishes.

These examples are representatives of the role images in basic readers at Cebu Central School. Women are presented as homemakers and, secondarily, as participants in occupations outside the home. Even when women have jobs, they are shown to have the principal responsibility for the family and the house. Women are portrayed as engaged in "women's occupations," such as teacher, nurse, and secretary. Boys have as many chores as girls at home but their jobs are portrayed as more adventurous and varied. Mothers are presented as lovely, calm, weak, feminine, nurturing, and passive, whereas fathers are active, dominant, strong, and intelligent. These images correspond to the self-images of men and women. By the time Filipino children finish elementary education, there are differences in the expectations and aspirations of boys and girls for their future roles. "Femaleness" is seen as synonymous with "domesticity," while "masculinity" is associated with activities outside the home.

Gelia Castillo's investigation of Filipino adolescents' perception of occupational ascription substantiates the notion of gender-related job orientations (Castillo 1976:8-10). Male and female student responses show no statistically significant differences in their prescription that the following jobs are only (or mainly) for men: carpenter, farm laborer, priest, policeman, soldier, and union leader. Jobs that are mainly for women include secretary, nurse, and beautician. Male and female adolescents differed in their role assignment of eight occupations: college professor, corporation executive, doctor, lawyer, government clerk, storekeeper, and small factory

owner. More females than males indicated that these occupations should be pursued equally by men and women. More males than females believe that these occupations should be for men only or mainly for men.

Economic Role

The socialization process in the Filipino family and school emphasizes the domestic role of women and their circumscribed opportunities. Nevertheless, fully one-third of the adult female population is in the labor force. The occupations that women choose tend to be those that are considered acceptable for females, although women have made large inroads into positions that formerly had been deemed suited to men. In particular, Filipinas in the last two decades have moved into "professional positions," so that now there are more female than male professionals in the Philippines. This is perhaps the most striking example of the "ambiguous Filipina."

According to the interview responses of Cebu's leading professional women, a number of factors explain why women have moved into professional occupations. First, almost every professional had a college degree; the *sine qua non* for professional attainment was higher education. Women's majority status in institutions of higher education, then, is one important factor in explaining professional achievement. Second, of the 78 female elites that were studied, all of the 67 married women with children hired maids or had live-in relatives do the housework and care for the children. Their economic condition was sufficient to allow them independence from household chores. Nationally, only 4 percent of Filipino households can afford to hire a maid (Bautista 1977:2-11).

Third, approximately one-half of the elite women were able to conduct their professional duties from their homes. For example, travel agents, certified public accountants, dentists, orthodontists, and optometrists, set up offices in their homes. These women reported that their husbands were more comfortable about such an arrangement; and, of course, they could continue to supervise the household.

Finally, many respondents reported that there were

openings in professional fields, but women were less welcome in administrative, political, or managerial jobs which demand a public presence and considerable travel as well as late hours. The positions of dentist, doctor, accountant, and optometrist do not require such activities, and were considered more suitable.

The respondents further noted that they do not seek positions that would put them on a higher status or level than their husbands. Married women, suggested that, in the business world, they might actually manage an enterprise but, for public consumption, allow their husband to be the president or chairman. Women tend to control the position of treasurer in businesses, which is congruent with the image of the Filipina, who controls the family purse strings.

This acquiescence to men's domination of administrative and executive positions which helps perpetuate patriarchal attitudes, stems partially from a calculated cost-benefit analysis of options. Economic payoffs in the professions are perceived to be more appropriate to women who see themselves as "supplementing" their husbands' income, whereas executive or administrative positions are deemed unsuitable for women. The majority of Cebu elite respondents reported that their husbands did not want them to engage in public activities.

Men earned a larger salary that women regardless of occupation. The overall average weekly cash earning of males is at least one and a half times more than that of females (80 and 49 pesos respectively; Rojas-Aleta, et al. 1977:151). One reason for the inequality of wages between men and women is the view that men are the principal wage earners and women's income is supplementary. Hence, management discriminates on the basis of sex, despite equal performance by female employees. Second, women make fewer salary demands, so that they do not surpass their husband's salary. Third, women are perceived to have less physical capability and, hence, are paid less than men. Fourth, certain laws designed to protect women result in lower wages. For example, laws which provide compensation to women on maternity leave foster a cost-benefit attitude on the part of employers; thus companies compensate for additional benefits by paying lower wages to female employees (Rojas-Aleta, et al. 1977:156-157).

Rural Cebuana respondents who worked outside the home reported that their primary reason was financial. Of the 105 rural female respondents, 58 were in the labor force. In interviews they stated that a deteriorating economic situation caused them to seek employment; specifically, many mentioned inflation (which has caused the 1979 peso to be worth about 40 centavos, reltive to the 1972 value). However, among the elite female respondents in Cebu City, economic need was a secondary consideration. More often, they mentioned boredom and lack of self-fulfillment from housework as the principal reasons for working. The fact that a larger number of these women had "married up," in terms of their husbands' economic standing, and came from high socio-economic families helps explain their lack of emphasis on financial considerations. The few elite women respondents in Cebu City who said they make more money than their husbands make sure that no one in Cebu society knows it.

Political Role

Women have played only a minor role in formal governmental institutions in the Philippines. In the most recent elections (before martial law) only 5.5 percent of the elected senators, governors, vice-governors, mayors and councilors were women. In a comparable study in the United States, 6.7 percent of the elected public officials were women (Lee 1977:127). Although 54.8 percent of the Philippine government service consists of women, only one woman in twenty holds a supervisory position in contrast to one in five for male employees. Most women bureaucrats are in the lowest echelons of government service. Although women in America comprise 33.7 percent of the full-time federal civil service workers, they constitute only 1.9 percent of the supergrade levels, GS-16 through GS-18 (Amundsen 1977:73).

In Cebu Province, the low level of women in administration parallels their position at the national level. The provincial governor and all officers of the provincial assembly are men. Only one woman, the provincial auditor, holds the rank of provincial department head, whereas 16 men fill comparable positions. Although 19.6 percent of the *barangay* (village) councilors in Cebu

Province were women, only 8.6 percent of those who were elected to *barangay* leadership positions were women.

In informal politics, outside the conventional institutions, women play a corresponding minor role. In Cebu, elite women in the city and rural women in the villages focus their political energies on limited, "appropriate" spheres of action. Rural and urban women participate in non-time demanding religious groups for women, fiesta groups, and health and nutrition organizations. The Cebu study shows that rural men and women overwhelmingly reject women's participation in political activity (Neher 1980:108-124). The crucial factor in determining elite urban women's participation in political affairs is the approval of the husband; whereas economic and time constraints are the crucial determinants for rural women.

The responses of the elite Cebu women to the open-ended interview question "Why do women stay away from political activity?" can be categorized as follows:

Husbands don't want their wives to engage in politics (56%)
Politics is dirty (54%)
Politics is a man's world (52%)
Women are "onion-skinned" and therefore unwilling to tolerate the gossip (28%)
Women sacrifice their reputation in politics (28%)
Women should stay at home (26%)
Alternative activities (business, professions) are more lucrative (25%)

In Cebu City no exclusively women's groups have political activities as their primary purpose. Indeed, they consciously eschew political activities and center on "safe" projects that provide a needed service but do not threaten the established order and are not contentious. Women's groups have not emphasized "women's issues" and therefore they do not constitute an influential constituency on particular issues, and their clout is negligible.

Conclusion

The role of the Cebuana and, more generally, the

Filipina in the Philippine society remains ambiguous. Compared to other Asian women, the Filipina's role in her society is larger in the areas of education and the economy. Compared to Filipino men, however, her role is circumscribed in all other areas.

The makers of social policy recognize that an adequate data base is necessary before effective policy options can be chosen. Without a thorough understanding of societal sex roles in various areas of life, the danger exists that policy formulation and implementation will be irrelevant, futile, ineffective, and counterproductive. This paper presents an analysis of women's roles in one region of the Philippines, but leaves to the Filipino policymaker the task of interpreting the data for assessing policy options. It attempts to be policy relevant only in the sense of systematically presenting the information that is necessary to those who create and carry out social policy.

The policy implications of these findings are, of course, significant. Changes in sex role images are wrenching, since the power and privileges of a society revolve around role dominance. It is as difficult to free women from the anxieties of role equality as it is to convince men to relinquish their positions of power. To change sex roles is to confront virtually every sector of societal life.

Moreover, it is not entirely clear what policies should be invoked with respect to sex role changes. Policies that do not consider the complex roles of women could well be futile. For example, a policy to encourage more women to join the labor force may flounder if a concomitant birth control program is not made available. The need for maids to do housework for working wives and mothers (if husbands continue to decline their share of work) could lead to an increase in numbers of one of the most exploited classes of people in the Philippines.

There is also a danger that policy changes could reflect imposition by policymakers or "outsiders," of a Westernized elite value system, specifically American scholars and AID consultants. Rural and urban women in Cebu generally scoff at the notion of "women's liberation"

and comment: "In the Philippines, it is the men who need liberating."

It would be inappropriate if the values of the "American liberated woman" were imposed on a society from the outside. It does seem appropriate, however, that policy goals for women in the Philippines reflect the rewards that are available to men in this society (Lipman-Blumen 1979:375).

At present, the male Filipino's options are far greater than the Filipina's in the crucial areas of education, economy, and the political system. The role images of both sexes underscore and perpetuate the inequality of opportunities between men and women in the Philippines. The conventional view of men and women as social equals is not borne out by the evidence.

NOTES

1. The research for this study was carried out in 1978 and 1979 in Cebu Province, the Philippines. Data sources include government documents and reports, in-depth discussions with academic specialists, and extended interviews with Cebu Province government officials, elite women in Cebu City, and rural men and women. Rural interviews were carried out in Cebuano, urban elite interviews in English. The elite women are a sample of presidents of 84 women's organizations in Cebu City. Each, in turn, named 5 other women who they believed were influential in Cebu and those who were most often named were added to the list to be interviewed. Rural men and women who were interviewed represent a sample of adults in three villages 15, 30, and 120 miles from Cebu City. Bernardo Cañizares, Deolito Alvarez, and Linda Siervo, of the University of San Carlos in Cebu City, played a major role in the collection and interpretation of the data. Financial support came from the Fulbright Foundation. The University of San Carlos provided scholarly and material support.

2. The literature on the Filipina is extensive but not easily accessible. The most comprehensive bibliography is in Isabel Roxas-Aleta, *A Profile of Filipino Women,* and contains 250 citations of articles, books, monographs, and theses and dissertations dealing with the role of women in the Philippines. Among the major works available to an international audience are Encarnacion Alzona, *The Filipino Woman* (Manila, 1934); N. Anima, *Courtship and Marriage Practices among Philippine Tribes* (Quezon City: Omar Publications, 1975); Rodolfo A. Bulatao (ed.), *Stereotypes, Status and Satisfactions: The Filipina among Filipinos* (Quezon City: Department of Sociology, University of the Philippines, 1977); Gelia T. Castillo, "The Filipino Woman as Manpower: The Image and the Empirical Reality," *Human Resource Development Journal*, 1, nos. 3-4, 177-188; Gelia T. Castillo, "Occupational Sex Roles as Perceived by Filipino Adolescents," *Philippine Sociological Review*, 9,

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Chapter Nine

SEXUAL STATUS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN, AGRICULTURE AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

Robert L. Winzeler

> Where but in Java is it customary for women of good birth to have their pomp, their clothes, their golden crowns and diadems like the Javanese? When they go out they go out in state looking like angels. There is no doubt that in the world there are (no more) presumptuous women, and for this reason many die virgins in their houses when they cannot gratify themselves by marrying great people. (*The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires* 1512-1515, quoted from Cortesão 1944)

Introduction

During the past decade anthropologists and others have devoted considerable effort to the comparative analysis of sexual status and related dimensions of domestic organization. Such studies--of the position of women, of male dominance, of female infanticide, of forms of marriage and marriage payments, of types of agriculture and sex roles--have in some cases taken note of societies in Southeast Asia and in some cases not. However in no instance has much attention been devoted to this region in a systematic or overall way, although it is, I believe,

highly relevant to a reasonable appraisal of any hypothesis which aims at a general level of explanation. My aim in this paper is thus to evaluate what I take to be the main lines of analysis in comparative studies of sexual status in light of the Southeast Asian evidence. In doing so I also hope to add something to the understanding provided by the often excellent studies of Southeast Asianist scholars. As sources of information I have utilized both historical and ethnographic accounts of particular cultural groups and regions and the *Ethnographic Atlas* (Murdock 1967) and the Human Relations Area Files. See Table 9 for the list of societies used for cross-cultural tabulations in this chapter.

Observations in the older literature on Southeast Asian peoples about the status of women and the nature of the relations between the sexes are common. The remarks by Tomé Pires cited above show that such statements can be traced back to the very earliest stages of the European presence in the region, and hence that they have reference to fully "traditional" patterns. Writing early in the nineteenth century of Indonesia, Crawfurd (1820: 73) provides a lengthy statement of a kind which is not uncharacteristic of accounts of particular groups or regions. It is of interest in part because it draws attention to several matters with which later comparative studies of sexual status and domestic social organization have been concerned--the relationship between marriage payments and the status of women, between economic roles and broader social ones, and between sexual relationships of dominance or equality and political ones:

> The most prominent of the domestic relations respects the condition of women. The institution of marriage, I need hardly observe, is a universal ordinance of the Indian islanders; and the lot of women may, on the whole, be considered as more fortunate than in any other country of the east. In general, they are not immured at all, and when they are secluded, it is but partially, and not with the jealous restraint which has become proverbial with respect to the manners of the east. The husband invariably pays *a price* for his wife among all

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Table 9

Societies Used in Cross Cultural Tabulation

Cluster	Name
Southeast Asian Mainland	
189	Chin
189	Garo
190	Khasi
191	Agami
192	Kachin
193	Palaung
194	Burmese
195	Karen
196	Siamese
197	Akha
198	Lamet
199	Muong
200	Annamese
201	Mrong Gar
202	Cham
203	Cambodians
204	Semang
205	Senoi
206	Malays
207	Selung
208	Lawa
Mainland Total	21
Southeast Asian Islands	
209	Ifugao
210	Sugbuhanon
211	Subanun
212	Iban
213	Batak
214	Minanghabau
215	Mentawi
216	Kubu
217	Javanese
218	Balinese
219	Sumbanese
220	Macassarese
221	Toradja
222	Ili Mandiri
223	Alorese
224	Belu
225	Tanimbarese
226	Kei Islanders
227	Ambonese
228	Tobelorese
Insular Total	20
Southeast Asia Total	41

> the tribes; but not withstanding, women are not treated with contempt or disdain. They eat with the men, and associate with them in all respects on terms of equality, as surprise us in such a condition of society. This equality of the sexes, it is remarkable enough, is perhaps most thoroughly recognized among the most warlike tribes. Among the nations of the Celebes, the most warlike of the Archipelago, the women appear in public without any scandal; they take an active concern in all the business of life; they are consulted by men on all public affairs, and are frequently raised to the throne, and that too when the monarchy is elective. Here the woman eats with her husband, nay, by a custom which points at the equality of the sexes, always from the very same dish, the only distinction left to the latter being that of eating from the right side. At public festivals, women appear among the men; and those invested with authority sit in their councils when affairs of state are discussed, possessing, it is often alleged, even more than their due share in the deliberations . . . . The Javanese women are industrious and laborious beyond all those of the Archipelago, but their labour, instead of being imposed upon them by the men, becomes through its utility to the latter, a source of distinction. Their faculties, indeed, exercised in the various branches of domestic and agricultural economy, in which they are so often employed, place their understandings on many points above those of the men (italics original).

The observations and analyses which exist in the more recent studies of various Southeast Asian peoples tend to make the same general points as Crawfurd. (See e.g., H. Geertz 1961:44-46, 122-128; and Jay 1969:92-93 on the Javanese; H. & C. Geertz 1975:56 on the Balinese; Siegel 1969:137-138 on the Acehnese; Spiro 1977:257-295 on the Burmese; de Young 1955:24-25 and L. & J. Hanks 1963 on the Thai; Swift 1963 on Malays; and Fox 1963 on

the Filipinos. See also the comparative remarks by Spiro 1977:257 and the comparative analysis by Tanner 1974 of the Javanese, Minangkabau and the Acehnese.)

It is important to note that the status of the sexes is not identical in these various cases. As Whyte (1978: 95-120) has recently noted in a general (world-wide) cross-cultural study, the extent of sexual equality or male dominance in a particular society depends on the criteria chosen to measure it. A detailed comparison between Southeast Asian societies would show that even among those groups which have kinship and family forms of a bilateral rather than a patrilineal nature there is apt to be considerable variation. Further, there would be even greater variation to be noted if systematic account were taken of the upland tribal groups of the mainland or of the interior tribal groups of the far eastern region of Indonesia. The inheritance of property, the nature of marriage payments, management of the domestic economy and involvement in external economic activities, jural status, divorce patterns, ritual roles and religious status are all matters which are apt to show greater or lesser variation along sex lines among different Southeast Asian peoples.

Yet the cumulative result of a close case by case examination of a wide range of Southeast Asian societies would almost certainly sustain the more general statements which have been made about particular groups or about the region. Surely few if any ethnographers have taken strong exception to such statements, though many have qualified them, and there appear to be no well-known studies of any Southeast Asian society which have been taken as a contrasting case. Finally, as observers such as Crawfurd have also long noted, the general patterning of sexual status and sexual relations throughout Southeast Asia is of particular interest because of the contrast it presents with both China and India, with which, in the latter case, there are certain important and well developed cultural continuities. Again, it seems unlikely that anyone conversant with the literature on these three areas would dispute the significance of these contrasts.

Explanation of the pattern is another matter. The various ethnographic accounts which deal with the position of men and women in particular Southeast Asian societies sometimes provide explanations for the patterns which are described. Hildred Geertz for example suggests that the strong or dominant position which women have in contemporary domestic Javanese society, one which she describes as, among other things, "matrifocal" or 'mother centered" in nature, is due to the fact that emotional bonds between parents and daughters are more enduring than betwen parents and sons (H. Geertz 1961: 44-45); and to the fact that men are more dependent upon women than vice versa, since women are more readily able to, if need be, engage in men's work--as in agriculture--than men are women's domestic work (p. 122-123). Such an account explains the positions of men and women in relation to other features of an ongoing social order, its norm and its work patterns. It provides insight into how a pattern, once established, endures over time, and resists or transforms cultural or religious influences from abroad which define the position of the sexes very differently.

Such analyses of domestic social arrangements, psychological themes, religion and symbolism and the like can also provide important insights and contribute to an understanding of the position of men and women in Southeast Asian society and history. The concern of this paper is with another level of explanation and understanding, one in which the focus is upon more general and developmental issues as formulated in comparative studies. Basically there have been three such lines of analysis. The first of these derives sexual status from the roles of men and women in agricultural production. The second links sexual status and the domestic social order to the wider social and political order, that is to the development of social stratification and the state. The third is concerned with the relationship between the position of women and certain other features of social organization with warfare, demography and the practice of female infanticide. These three lines of analysis can be labeled the "economic," "political," and the "demographic," though to do so involves an oversimplification in all cases. That is, the specific interpretations

which I have lumped together under each category are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and there is some overlap in regard to certain matters, above all population ecology. Further, these various interpretations do not all focus on the same type or types of society.

Economic Interpretation

The most common explanations of the relative status of the sexes are those which can be labeled as economic. Such explanations, which interpret the positions of men and women ecologically or in terms of their relationship to the means of production, have a long history. An economic interpretation of the status of women was prominent in Engel's (1942; original 1884) study of the family and remains a core feature of the Marxist perspectives on society. Outside of the Marxist tradition such arguments have also for many decades been a concern in anthropological or comparative studies such as those of Hobhouse and Wheeler and Ginsberg (1965), Lowie (1961), and Sumner and Keller (1927). Here they have often been held to be simplistic or inadequate (Lowie 1961:193; Goldschmidt and Kunkel 1971; Sanday 1973). I shall be concerned with the more sophisticated versions of the economic argument which have been formulated in recent years, specifically those of Boserup (1970) and Goody (1976). These studies have several virtues which others lack. For one thing, they provide more highly integrated and fully explanatory interpretations of sexual status in fairly specific terms instead of vague ones such as "prestige."

Boserup's interpretation forms a part of her longer study, *Women's Role in Economic Development*. It involves an analysis which links population densities, alternative varieties of farming technologies and methods, the value of female versus male contributions to household agricultural income, the relative freedom and status of women in regard to men, the extent to which polygamy is practiced and the nature of marriage payments. She argues (1970:15-35) that the presumption that men are always the primary providers in traditional societies is a myth, that in regions in which shifting cultivation predominates women do most of the work while men do less,

and often little. This pattern is contrasted with that characteristic of regions of plough cultivation in which men do most or all of the productive agricultural work, though it is noted that in some regions so much labor is required in relation to very small landholdings to gain a living that both men and women must work hard. Regions in which very extensive agriculture, that is shifting cultivation, is (or until recently was) practiced include Subsaharan Africa and limited regions of Asia and the Pacific, including, notably, much of Southeast Asia. On the other hand, more intensive forms of cultivation using the plough are held to be characteristic of much of Eurasia. Shifting cultivation is the older and easier (at least for men) and more desirable form, given adequate land, a point that is analyzed in her earlier (1965) book. The transition to plough cultivation of permanent fields comes as a consequence of increase in population density. The use of the plough and draft animals being, for whatever exact reasons, masculine prerogatives, the role of women in agriculture is thereby diminished or eliminated.

The second part of the argument (Boserup 1970:37-52) is that the status of women differs markedly in regions of female and male farming, as do customs and arrangements regarding marriage. In female farming areas women pay their way, at least, in terms of productive agricultural labor. This makes polygyny a "practical" mode of marriage for men, for the more wives a man has the greater his income. Consequently bridewealth (whereby cash or goods are given by the groom, his family, or kin to the family or kin of the bride) is the predominant form of marriage payment. Conversely, in areas of plough cultivation polygyny is an economic luxury for men which may be permitted but which is rare in demographic terms, and dowry is a more common form of marriage transaction. She argues further that where women work hard in agriculture they are valued both as laborers and as mothers of the next generation. In such cases men desire strongly to have more than one wife; on the other hand, in societies based upon male agricultural labor women are valued only as mothers of sons (Boserup 1970:51). Finally, the economic value of women and the nature of marriage payments affect not only female status relative to men but

the chances that females will survive infancy and childhood. Reference is thus made to the traditional practice of female infanticide in North India. In this case, where parents continue to fear the burden of dowry, there is a continuing disproportionate treatment of male and female children in illness and in the provision of general nutrition which is reflected in the higher female mortality rate in this region.

This argument provides a clear and comprehensive interpretation of the position of women in traditional agricultural societies. It leaves no doubt as to the direction of causal influence. Population density in relation to available agricultural technology determines whether women constitute the primary farm labor force; and whether they do or not determines the nature of marriage payments, the extent to which polygyny is practiced, and their position relative to men. The power of economic considerations to overcome cultural ones is illustrated again in regard to India. Here, while female seclusion and dowry are powerful norms, in the case of the lower castes--among which women are forced by necessity to labor outside of the home--bridewealth is the custom.

The extent to which these arguments, as general statements about the relationship between farming systems and sexual status, are supported by the available evidence is another matter. Boserup offers her conclusions as generalizations on the basis of admittedly only rather limited data. However, the anthropologist Jack Goody (1976) reports on a cross-cultural study using the *Ethnographic Atlas* (Murdock 1967) in which Boserup's various arguments are tested and for the most part supported (Goody 1976:23-40).

In regard to Southeast Asia Boserup suggests that this is a region in which female farming and bride price are common:

> In South and East Asia the connection between the work . . . of women . . . and the direction of marriage payments is close and unmistakable. For instance, in Burma, Malaya, and Laos women do most of the agricultural work and bride prices are customary (Boserup 1970:48).

However, either the *Ethnographic Atlas* or a systematic search of the ethnographic literature would reveal that female farming systems--ones in which women do all or most of the work are not widely characteristic of the region as is indicated in Table 10. Here it can be seen

Table 10

Sex Roles and Advanced Agriculture
in Southeast Asian Societies

	Advanced Agriculture		
	Present	Absent	Total
Societies with:			
female farming	3	4	7
male farming	5	2	7
equal participation	11	11	22
Total number of societies in Table			36
Number of societies without agriculture			2
No information on sex roles in agriculture			3
			77

$x^2 = .067$
$P > .98$

N.B. Sex roles in agriculture are coded in col. 62: F, G = female farming; M, N = male farming; D, E = equal participation; d = no agriculture; no entry = no information.

Advanced agriculture is coded in cols. 28 and 39. Col. 28: I, J = present; C, E, H, O = absent; no entry = no information. Col. 39: q, p = present; no entry = absent or no information.

that the most common forms of agricultural division of labor by sex are ones in which men and women are more or less equally involved, often on an undifferentiated basis. There is some variation between extensive and advanced agricultural regimes with regard to female versus male farming but not, again, where equal participation is concerned. There is, further, no relationship between male and female farming and the nature of marriage payments, as is indicated in Table 11. Finally, polygyny (Table 12) which Boserup associates with female farming, as a common general mode of marriage (Tables 11 & 12), is demographically rare in Southeast Asia.

The evidence regarding Southeast Asia thus indicates that Boserup is not correct in some of her specific statements about the status of women in farming in this region. This does not necessarily mean that her arguments are wrong in more general terms or that they are inapplicable to Southeast Asia. It can be said that the relatively high status and the independence widely characteristic of Southeast Asian women is linked to a farming pattern in which men and women are both involved, most often on equal and frequently on undifferentiated terms. This in turn is reasonably consistent with her argument concerning monogamy and polygyny in relation to male and female farming patterns. That is, since women do not commonly form the primary labor force in Southeast Asian agriculture polygyny is not an economically attractive marriage pattern for men as it is in areas where wives are primary agricultural producers. On the other hand, since women do commonly engage in productive activities including farm labor more or less on par with men, they are not economic liabilities to the extent that they would be in regions of male farming. Hence the widely characteristic pattern, whereby polygyny is permitted but not generally practiced, as opposed to a pattern of strict monogamy or widespread polygyny.

However, to look at Southeast Asia in this way requires that Boserup's simple two-type scheme of male versus female farming patterns be broadened into one of three types, the third being one of sexual balance or common participation. As Goody's (1976:131) evidence from the *Ethnographic Atlas* makes clear, such a scheme of three types embodies a more realistic view of

Table 11

Marriage Transactions and Sex in Agriculture
in Southeast Asian Societies

	Sex Roles in Agriculture			
	Male Farming	Female Farming	Equal Participation	Total
Marriage Transactions				
Societies with:				
bride price or substantial bride service	3	4	13	20
dowry	1	0	0	1
reciprocal or absent or token bride price	3	3	9	15
Total number of societies in Table				36
Agriculture absent or unimportant				2
No information on sex roles in agriculture				3
				41

$x^2 = 5.562$

$p > .30$

N.B. Sex roles in agriculture are coded in col. 62: F, G = female farming; M, N = male farming; D, E = equal participation; d = no agriculture; no entry = no information.

Marriage transactions are coded [illegible] col. 12; B = brideprice; S = brideservice; G, [illegible] = gift/sister exchange; D = dowry; T, O = no payment taken; no entry = no information.

Table 12

Plurality of Marriage and Advanced Agriculture
in Southeast Asian Societies

	Advanced Agriculture		
	Present	Absent	Total
Societies with:			
monogamy	5	7	12
limited or occasional polygyny	11	15	25
general polygyny	1	1	2
Total number of societies in Table			39
Agriculture absent or unimportant			2
			41

$x^2 = .116$

$P > .95$

N.B. Plurality of marriage is coded in cols. 14 and 15: M = monogamy; N = limited polygyny; G, F, E in col. 14, R, S, Q, P in either col. = general polygyny; O, no entry in col. 14 and in col. 15 = no information.

Advanced agriculture is coded in cols. 28 and 39. Col. 28: I, J = present; C, E, H, O = absent; no entry = no information. Col. 39: q, p = present; no entry = absent or no information.

traditional farming systems throughout the world in general. It also requires that intensive agriculture in Southeast Asia be regarded as an exception to the general complex of male farming and dowry that is held by Boserup, Goody and others to be widely characteristic of Europe and Asia. I shall return to this latter point after considering a slightly different version of the economic interpretation of male and female status and relations in traditional societies.

As noted above, Boserup's contentions have been examined and expanded upon by Goody (1976) in a comparative study using cross-cultural methods, particularly with regard to his own earlier comparative work on bridewealth and dowry in Africa and Asia (Goody 1973). At the center of his study is a concern with the ownership and transmission of property in relation to marriage and family organization and sexual status. The basic notion is that of "devolution," the passage of property from parents to children and hence from one family or kin group to another through marriage payments and inheritance practices. The passage of property to both men and women constitutes "diverging devolution." Societies in which women as well as men inherit property or in which some property is settled upon women in the form of a dowry are practicing diverging devolution. By contrast, societies in which only men inherit property and in which marriage payments take the form of bridewealth--whereby the groom or his male family members or kinsmen give wealth to the male members of kinsmen of the bride in exchange for rights over her--are not practicing diverging devolution. Goody finds that societies which practice diverging devolution, which allocate family wealth to daughters as well as sons, are statistically more likely to be ones in which men rather than women engage in agriculture. Such societies are also apt to be ones which practice intensive cultivation and use the plough, and which are characterized by greater population densities. Thus, societies in which a share of family property is passed to females in general show indications of being more politically, economically and socially evolved than those in which it is not; and in regard to regional distributions, Goody finds diverging devolution to be almost

totally lacking in Subsaharan Africa in contrast to other regions of the Old World (Goody 1976:12).

In his explanation of the presence or absence of female rights to family property and of the nature of marriage types and sexual status in various societies Goody begins with traditional modes of production. Like Boserup and others he holds that:

> The sexual division of labour in farming is bound to be closely linked to the type of agriculture, the relations of production to the means of production. In particular the plough is an instrument employed almost entirely by men; indeed it is the case that all large livestock, whether horses, cattle or camels, are almost exclusively in male hands (Goody 1976: 35).

Goody, however, does not seek to derive the nature of marriage payments as directly from the agricultural division of labor as does Boserup. He seeks to link these most immediately to the broader evolution of society and specifically to the nature of social stratification. Diverging devolution, he suggests,

> arises when parents are concerned to maintain the status of their children in regard to other members of the community, and particularly the status of their daughters, by means of the settlement of property. Hence it is likely to appear in societies in which status is based upon economic differentiation. Indeed it is both cause and effect of a certain type of stratification. Where differences of economic status emerge dowry is the characteristic marriage transaction (Goody 1976:23).

Such changes come about when the use of the animal-drawn plough increases agricultural productivity and makes available the surplus which is the prerequisite of economically based class organization. In sum, Goody derives the causes of the patterning of sexual roles both directly from forms of agriculture, that is from male versus female farming, and from the development of

economic classes, which in turn is linked to more intensive agriculture, that is the use of the plough--and hence, male farming.

Turning again to Southeast Asia, the information provided for this region in the *Ethnographic Atlas*--or otherwise available in ethnographic sources--provides some limited support for the applicability of Goody's interpretation of the basis of sexual status. In a considerable number of Southeast Asian societies women do have rights in family property although in nearly all cases such rights are those of inheritance rather than dowry. Further, for what such evidence is worth, the societies in which women have such rights include the larger, more populous peasantries such as the Burmese, Thai, Malays, Javanese and Cambodians, so that the pattern can be said to be a demographically significant one throughout much of the region. The distribution of diverging devolution is thus in accord with Goody's argument that female rights in property are more characteristic of complex stratified societies than of egalitarian, tribal ones. While female property rights are by no means limited only to societies characterized by economic stratification (Table 13), all such stratified societies do have such rights. On the other hand, female property rights show no statistical relationship with either plough cultivation (Table 14) or advanced agriculture which includes use of either or both the plough and/or irrigation (Table 15). That is, not all societies which have intensive agriculture have female property rights (though more do than do not). While such rights are found in a significant number of societies which lack advanced agriculture, this may be accounted for by the fact that not all Southeast Asian societies which make use of intensive forms of cultivation are economically stratified, and that female property rights are found in a number of egalitarian societies which have extensive forms of cultivation.

This brings us back to a point made earlier, that modes of cultivation in Southeast Asia do not really conform to the pattern noted by Boserup and Goody in regard to other regions of the world involving a division between male and female farming, whereby men control advanced farming while women control more

Table 13

Societies with Diverging devolution and Stratification in Southeast Asia

	Stratification (caste and class)		
	Present	Absent	Total
Diverging devolution			
present	6	9	15
absent	1	13	14
No individual property rights or rules of transmission	0	5	5
Total number of societies in Table			34
No information on diverging devolution			7
			41

$x^2 = 6.894$

$P > .05$

N.B. Diverging devolution is coded in cols. 12, 74 and 76. Col. 12: D = dowry (diverging devolution present); B, S, G, O, T = diverging devolution absent; cols. 74 and 76: D, M = diverging devolution; O = absence of individual rights or rules of inheritance; P, Q = diverging devolution absent (diverging devolution present if present in either col.); stratification is coded in cols. 67 and 69. Col. 67: C = class; col. 69: C = caste.

Table 14

Societies with Diverging devolution and Plough Agriculture in Southeast Asia

	Plough Agriculture		
	Present	Absent	Total
Diverging devolution			
present	5	11	16
absent	4	9	13
No individual property rights or no rule of inheritance	1	4	5
Total number of societies in Table			34
No information on diverging devolution			7
			41

$x^2 = .251$

$P > .98$

N.B. Diverging devolution is coded in cols. 12, 74 and 76. Col. 12: D = dowry (diverging devolution present); B, S, G, O, T = diverging devolution absent; cols. 74 and 76: C, D, M = diverging devolution; O = absence of individual rights or rules of inheritance; P, Q = diverging devolution absent (diverging devolution present if present in either col.); stratification is coded in cols. 67 and 69. Col. 67: C = class; col. 69: C = caste.

Plough agriculture is coded in col. 39: present = 2, 3; absent = 1. The absence of an entry may mean either no plough or no information.

Table 15

Societies with Diverging devolution and Intensive Agriculture in Southeast Asia

	Intensive Agriculture		
	Present	Absent	Total
Diverging devolution			
present	7	9	16
absent	6	7	13
No individual property rights or no rules of inheritance	1	4	5
Total number of societies in Table			34
No information on diverging devolution			7
			41

$x^2 = 1.102$

$P > .70$

N.B. Diverging devolution is coded in cols. 12, 74 and 76. Col. 12: D = dowry (diverging devolution present); B, S, G, O, T = diverging devolution absent; cols. 74 and 76: C, D, M = diverging devolution; O = absence of individual rights or rules of inheritance; P, Q = diverging devolution absent (diverging devolution present if present in either col.); stratification is coded in cols. 67 and 69. Col. 67: C = class; col. 69: C = caste.

Advanced agriculture is coded in cols. 28 and 39. Col. 28: I, J = present; C, E, H, O = absent; no entry = no information. Col. 39: q, p = present; no entry = absent or no information.

primitive forms. This may be related in part to the possibility that wet rice cultivation is the more or less exclusive form of intensive agriculture. Such a possibility has indeed been raised and discussed as an explanation of sexual balance in Southeast Asia (Moore 1973:912). However, it seems clear enough that this is not a fully satisfactory approach, for sexual status in particular as well as social organization in general vary markedly from South India to Southeast Asia to South China, Japan and Korea, although all are wet rice cultivating areas. At a more basic level the assumption that the involvement of the sexes in agricultural activities should vary between societies practicing wet rice cultivation and those engaging in intensive dry crop cultivation is doubtful. Such an assumption cannot be tested in regard to Southeast Asia since the latter form of cultivation is hardly, if at all, present. However, it can be noted that among those groups of the region which do depend upon wet rice agriculture there is some variation in the relative involvement of men and women; several have greater or exclusive male participation, and several greater female, though most have sexually balanced participation. Further, in South and East Asia, the pattern of sexual involvement in cultivation does not vary much between wet rice and dry grain modes, as can be seen in Table 16. In East Asia the equal participation of the sexes in intensive grain agriculture is more common than in South Asia, but this is so in regard to both wet and dry modes of agriculture. It is only in Southeast Asia that instances occur in which female labor is predominant in wet rice cultivation. This alone does not provide an explanation of the status of the sexes in Southeast Asia. Rather, the involvement of men and women in this form of intensive cultivation is about the same as it is in more extensive forms of cultivation. While this does not necessarily mean that modes of production are an irrelevant consideration, it does indicate that there are other factors which have a direct bearing upon the sexual division of labor as well as upon the status of the sexes. Thus a society composed of independent nuclear families, each controlling and working its own land, might be more apt to require the services of its female members than one composed of

Table 16

Sex Roles in Advanced Agriculture in Asian Societies

	Societies with Wet Rice Agriculture			Societies with Advanced Dry Grain Agriculture			
	Southeast Asia	East Asia	South Asia	Southeast Asia	East Asia	South Asia	Total
Sex Participation:							
female farming	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
male farming	4	2	5	0	4	1	16
equal participation	8	3	2	1	4	2	20
Total	16	5	7	1	8	3	40

N.B. Sex roles in agriculture is coded in cols. 12, 74 and 76. Col. 12: D = dowry (diverging devolution present); B, S, G, O, T = diverging devolution absent; cols. 74 & 76: C, D, M = diverging devolution; O = absence of individual rights or rules of inheritance; P, Q = diverging devolution absent (diverging devolution present if present in either col.); stratification is coded in cols. 67 and 69. Col. 67: C = class; col. 69: C = caste.

extended families which provide for a cooperative pooling of the labor of male kinsmen. Similarly, in a society which is stratified into landowning and tenant classes, females could be more readily freed, at least in the landowning sector, of the necessity of field labor than would be the case in ones lacking such economic strata. So stated, these are abstract generalizations but they have reference to basic differences between the peasantries of Southeast Asia and those of South India or China. In these latter areas population densities have been much greater over a longer period of time, economic stratification has been much more developed, and forms of kinship and family organization have tended toward extended types. This brings us to the next line of argument.

Social Stratification, the State and Sexual Status

Although the most common explanation of male dominance in traditional agricultural societies is the economic one that where men are strongly dominant it is because they control the farming operation, there has also been a long-standing tendency to attribute a causal role to the nature of the "state," the organization of the nobility and the class system of the society in question. Engels thus stressed that it was in association with the emergence of the state that the full subjugation of women occurred. He noted that the term "family" was invented by the Romans to denote a new social organism whose head ruled over wife and children and a number of slaves and was invested by Roman law with life and death over them all (Engels 1942:51). Scholars who have focused upon economic considerations have tended to give some weight to these matters as well. As we have already noted, Goody seeks to derive female status in advanced Eurasian societies both from the predominant role of men in plough agriculture and from the nature of the economic basis of class and status in these societies, which in turn derives from agricultural productivity. Boserup similarly links the diminished need for female participation in plough agriculture to the use of hired labor by landlords, as well as to the labor provided by animals. Still, for these scholars the status of men and women in traditional societies is a

fairly straight forward reflection of the material base of society, the mode of reproduction a direct consequence of the mode of production.

Conversely, Goldschmidt and Kunkel, who review evidence concerning a number of peasant societies throughout the world, discuss the economic or ecological basis of male dominance and family organization at length and argue also that productive roles are a major determinant of the social roles of men and women. They conclude, however, "that while the family structure relates to the character of land use and productive activity of the peasant farmer, it is to a very great degree manipulated by the external influences of the more powerful urban sectors of the state of which, by definition, the peasant is a part" (Goldschmidt and Kunkel 1971:1070). In the course of their review, these scholars find that while male dominance is to a considerable extent pervasive in peasant societies, it is largely lacking in those Southeast Asian cases (Thai and Burmese) which they examine. Although unable to fully account for this, they suggest that the weakness of the state and the presence of abundant land for agricultural expansion are partly responsible.

How then does the wider political order affect domestic sexual status? One suggestion is that the state provides a model of authority for the family, that, for example, a highly authoritarian political order will be linked to a highly authoritarian domestic one. This argument, that domestic patterns tend to be a microcosm of those of broader society, is made by Stephens (1963: 338). He suggests that within the family are to be found patterns of hierarchy and dominance which are characteristic of the larger polity:

> The kingdom emerges as a kind of pecking order social system in which similar deference behavior is repeated throughout many social relationships: wife to husband, child to father, child to father's brother, commoner to noble. Commoner women are at the bottom of this pecking order. They are ordinarily deferent to many persons, and defered to by no one.

One problem with this view is that it does not distinguish between patterns of deference, which may be highly important in some respects, and coercion or authority based upon, or involving, effective power. Still, it could be said that there are important parallels between the domestic and local relations between men and women and the organization of traditional Southeast Asian states. The relationship between village dwellers and the higher political realms of the state involved an often extreme degree of deference and awe. Evidently there was not, however, an equivalent degree of effective control by the state over its subject populations. To some extent this may have been true of most traditional states of Asia and elsewhere, for it was easier to stage elaborate ceremonies, engage in periodic military ventures, and sporadic punitive actions against rebellions or disloyal segments than to effectively organize, mobilize and administer subjects--though obviously the former abilities were dependent to some extent upon the latter. However, the difference between what the Southeast Asian courts and rulers claimed in terms of power and glory and what they amounted to in terms of government has often been noted (Heine Geldern 1956; Leach 1960; Winzeler 1976). Writing of Java and Bali in particular and of Indonesian states more generally, Clifford Geertz (1973:335) has used the term "theater state" to describe the basic character of these traditional polities.

Over much of Southeast Asia the number of different states was large, their size correspondingly small, their internal administrative development beyond the court and capital weak. The ruling groups of such states did not have the ability, even if they had the interest, to strongly affect the domestic organization of the village-dwelling population. According to Madge:

> Such petty kingdoms with only small peasant concentrations of a few villages to support them cannot exert much influence on the scattered outlying population. Even when a substantial kingdom was built up, as in Thailand, population density remained low by comparison with that of Mauryan India,

> Han China or Japan at the time of the Taika Reform. Southeast Asia thus lacked what India, China, and Japan had in common . . . long established high rural population density and authoritarian patrilineal norms emanating from elite groups and diffusing to the population as a whole (1974:164).

The nature of such authoritarian patrilineal norms and the manner in which they have affected local family organization elswhere in Asia has been noted for China. There Confucianism stressed orderly and harmonious relations between family members, filial piety and ancestor worship, all of which supported the patriarchal joint or extended family as the ideal (Yang 1965:172). Confucianism was the state religion, the guide to moral conduct within the household and within the broader society. It is true that the various elite, "great tradition," religions in Southeast Asia in different periods and times, including Hinduism and Islam, were also male-authoritarian, perhaps more so than Confucianism. But even if such religious ideologies were as pervasive in Southeast Asia as Confucianism was in China, which almost certainly was not the case, they were not linked to the development of an effective or influential set of official and traditional institutions of the sort which connected the individual family to the higher orders of the state in China. In the latter case such institutions included both the lineage and the territorial administrative hierarchy. The lineage in China was often a large, powerful, stratified organization that was at once social, political, economic and ritual in scope; in some regions almost a government in itself (Freedman 1958:114-125). The formal apparatus of local government was scanty in relation to the size of the population, and its functions were limited, but in addition to the lineage system there had also developed a system of collective responsibility that was used at least intermittently over a long period in Chinese history. This system was based upon the family as the primary unit of responsibility for the proper and law-abiding conduct of its members for whom the family head, as its representative, was responsible to the next level of organization (Goldschmidt and Kunkel 1971:1068).

In India the state was less monolithic and enduring, and formal government less developed than in China (Fox 1971:53-57 and passim). But the family was typically linked to a particularly strong and authoritarian set of institutions of stratification and corporate kinship. These institutions also had ritual, political and economic dimensions, and were all bound up with one or another version of a religious tradition which defined sexual status and domestic relations in a highly patricentric and hierarchal manner. The caste system, which at the local level was composed of corporate, usually patrilineal descent groups, manifested an extreme concern for marriage and the position of women (Dumont 1970:109-129). The regulation of marriages, the purity of daughters and sisters, the duty of wives, and the subordination and seclusion of women generally were all matters in which the individual household family was responsible to, or powerfully influenced by, the local caste group to which it belonged. Such groups in turn were affected by their relations with other local and surrounding castes.

The general absence of such wider social and political structures in Southeast Asia is a significant factor. At the same time such a conclusion needs to be qualified in two important and related ways. First, the patterning of sexual status in Southeast Asia is much the same in both state and non-state societies, which strongly suggests that it is old and long established. Thus to explain the nature of sexual relations and domestic sexual status by reference to the nature of the state and class organization of the societies of the region is to make reference to what may be a somewhat secondary consideration--one which explains what did not happen at some later and narrower phase of cultural and historical development rather than in an earlier and more general one. Second, it is possible to go further and argue that the nature of the Southeast Asian state is more a reflection of the pattern of local and domestic organization than vice versa (Winzeler 1976).

Demography, Warfare, Infanticide and Hypergamy

Demographic considerations are a significant element in the ecological and economic explanations which have been discussed in the earlier sections of this chapter.

Both Boserup and Goody make reference to population densities in relation to the modes of agricultural production which are held to underlie in one way or another patterns of sexual status in traditional societies. The analyses to which I now turn, however, are extensively concerned not only with population in general but with sex ratios in particular, as these relate to warfare and sexual status, or to other features of social organization, notable polygyny and hypergamy. The common focus of these analyses is the practice of female infanticide, its circumstances and consequences. Infanticide--the killing or abandonment of infants, plus certain closely related but more passive actions--was in the 19th century a source of interest to European observers of primitive and non-Western societies because of its barbarian implications, and in some cases (India and China) was treated at length in various documents and publications (Dikeman 1979). It was also of interest to Malthus and subsequent students of population as a check on demographic growth and a response to intense competition for resources.

While for both earlier and later analysts infanticide in general is of some demographic interest, female infanticide is particularly significant. For students of population this is so because the proportion of women of childbearing age in a population is of critical importance for its rate of growth. For students of social organization, female infanticide is of special interest because it affects the sex ratio of a society which (depending upon how it may be compensated for by subsequently greater male mortality through warfare or other causes) will affect marriage patterns and related social processes. For those interested in the comparative status of the sexes, female infanticide is obviously one--female suicide being another--of the most emphatic and significant indications that males and females are valued and treated differently in a society. As already noted, Boserup links the practice of female infanticide in India to the burden of dowry and the limited economic role of women in agriculture among middle and upper caste groups. Recent comparative anthropological analyses of female infanticide have been reported by Dikeman (1975, 1979;

both of which contain valuable reviews of the older literature), Divale (1970, 1972), Divale and Harris (1976), and Harris (1977:44-66).

Female Infanticide, Warfare and Male Supremacy among Band and Village Societies

Divale and Harris focus upon the practice of female infanticide in what they call "band and village" as opposed to "state level" societies. They advance an argument which links warfare, male supremacy and female infanticide together as a complex which serves to keep population in such groups within the "carrying capacity" of the enviroment. They hold that sex roles in economic production are not the most significant determinant of sexual status since women in strongly male dominant cultures may contribute more to subsistence than men. Warfare, on the other hand, is an exclusively male activity and one which serves to aggrandize masculine virtues. Since band and village societies are in competition with one another for scarce resources (e.g., agricultural lands or hunting territories), "wherever preindustrial warfare occurs we suggest that a premium survival advantage is confirmed upon the group that rears the largest number of fierce and aggressive warriors" (Divale and Harris 1976:27). Male aggressiveness and dominance in turn are rewarded with sexual gratification and polygynous marriage, which requires that women be reared to be passive and submissive to men. Further, male aggrandizement creates or implies a preference for male offspring and hence a tendency to female infanticide, which in turn leads to a shortage of females, which in turn reinforces aggressive competition among men for wives, and so on.

The basic function of the entire complex, which is to limit population, is most effectively achieved not through male combat deaths but through the removal of female infants. It is thus assumed along classic Malthusian lines that the natural tendency of human populations is to over reproduce themselves, and also that restraints on fertility or other causes of mortality are not sufficiently effective to prevent overpopulation. Their hypothesis is tested against a body of over a hundred cases and found to be confirmed. Among these

cases are three from Southeast Asia, one (the Miao) in their Asia group and two (Bali, and the Iban of Borneo) in their Oceania group. Of these, the status of Bali as only a "village level" society is doubtful.

As applied to Southeast Asia this hypothesis would predict that the more warlike peoples would have been the most male-dominant. As noted at the beginning of this paper, Crawfurd argued long ago in regard to Indonesia that the facts are otherwise: "The equality of the sexes, it is remarkable enough, is perhaps most thoroughly recognized among the most warlike tribes" (Crawfurd 1820:73-74). Crawfurd cited Celebes (Sulawesi) as an example, but other regions, about which less was then known, would have served as well. Since the Iban of Borneo are included in Harris and Divale's list of societies and since they are well described in ethnographic and historical terms (Freeman 1970; Pringle 1970; Roth 1968), they provide an apt example.

Though an interior riverine people, the Iban (or Sea Dayak) were well-known and widely feared along the coasts of Borneo and other islands as oceangoing pirates. With British penetration into the interior of the northern area of this vast island in the middle of the 19th century, Iban fondness for warfare, headhunting and new agricultural lands also became well-known.

Up to a point the Iban are perfect examples of the pattern described by Divale and Harris. Earlier observers were convinced, for example, that sexual interest was an important motivation toward headhunting.

"From all accounts there can be little doubt that one of the chief incentives to getting heads is the desire to please the women" (Roth 1968, Vol. II:163). In Iban legends and fables, the taking of a head was the way to a woman's heart; sexual conquest and marriage were based upon military success.

> . . . an old Sakaran (Iban) legend . . . says that the daughter of their great ancestor who resides in heaven, near the Evening Star, refused to marry until her betrothed brought her a present worth her acceptance. . . . After

> returning several times with gifts which were received with disdain, in a fit of despair, the lover went abroad, and killed the first man that he met, and throwing his victim's head at the maiden's feet, he exclaimed at the cruelty she had made him guilty of; but, to his surprise, she smiled, and said, that now he had discovered the only gift worthy of herself (Roth 1968, Vol. II:163).

As expansive slash-and-burn cultivators with an eager eye for virgin landscapes, and as aggressive and successful warriors whose headhunting activities were encouraged by women, the Iban should have been a society of raving male chauvinists and eager practitioners of female infanticide. Evidently this is not the case. Male supremacy was certainly not entirely lacking. Today there is a division of labor in agriculture in terms of which men carry out the more arduous tasks and women the more mundane ones, and this was true of the activity patterns of traditional Iban life in general. In the past, men, particularly younger men, spent long periods away from home in search of wealth and heads and the adventure and prestige which went with the acquisition of both, but men's status was apparently not achieved or maintained at the expense of the subordination of women in the domestic and village realm. In this regard Iban social organization--like that of surrounding groups--has been described generally by observers as exemplifying considerable sexual balance. Earlier observers (Roth 1968, Vol. I:108-134) who expressed revulsion at headhunting described Iban marriage and family practices in favorable terms, and the accounts which they provided have been sustained by subsequent social anthropological research. Like a great many other tribal (and state) level peoples in Southeast Asia (Murdock 1960:6-7) the Iban reckon kinship bilaterally, though their familial and domestic organization reflect even more complete sexual parity than is often the case among some such bilateral groups. Iban marry by personal choice, reside utrolaterally--that is equally often virilocally and uxorilocally--and are monogamous. Divorce is simple and can be initiated by either husband or wife, and property rights in the household and land are exactly the same for men and women (Freeman 1970:40-41).

As to infanticide and the treatment of male and female children, there is relatively little detailed information. According to the older sources there was a preference for male children though girls were considered to be nearly equally useful and were not treated with less kindness and were never neglected (Low, cited by Roth 1968, Vol. I:102). Infanticide was reported by one source to be "rarely heard of but much increased among some tribes as a result of a contact with Malays" (Roth 1968, Vol. I:101); and by another to have been "occasionally practiced to destroy the offspring of shame" (Low, cited by Roth, reproduced in the HRAF files); and finally by several sources as occurring as a consequence of maternal death in childbirth, though not always. In none of these accounts is mention made of female infanticide in particular.

In adaptive terms the Iban pattern, which in its general features at least was widespread in tribal Southeast Asia, appears to have been a success, at least in the short run. It could be argued that over a longer period--but if so, how much longer--population growth would have led to new pressures and alternatives. But in the absence of longitudinal demographic data such an argument is purely speculation in the case of the Iban, just as it is in the case of most other tribal peoples of Southeast Asia--or elsewhere.

Female Infanticide, Hypergamy, Polygyny and Dowry in Stratified Societies

In contrast to Divale and Harris, Dikeman deals with the practice of female infanticide in larger, "state level" societies. She is specifically concerned with a pattern of hypergamy, female infanticide, polygyny and dowry which she finds, through an erudite review of historical sources, in certain stratified societies "characterized by intense competition for scarce resources"; specifically those of traditional India, China and Medieval and early modern Western Europe. Her argument is that in these societies:

> . . . male reproduction shows extreme variance, men of high rank acquiring access to a disproportion of

> females through polygyny, . . . while those at the bottom are disproportionately excluded through delayed marriage, heavy mortalities, and the imposition of celibate roles, while their RS (reproductive success) is further reduced through heavy mortalities among their progeny. Further, the relative probable RS of males and females at different levels of the social hierarchy is culturally exacerbated through female preferential infanticide, suicide and celibacy (including prohibitions against widow remarriage or against sexual intercourse by mothers with reproductive offspring), all reaching greatest intensity at the top of the social pyramid. Middle and upper-class marriage systems are hypergamous, with competition between families (mostly patrilineal in these societies) for higher status grooms possessing greater access to scarce resources. The symbolic and economic index of competitive effectiveness is dowry or bridegroom price (Dikeman 1979:323).

She notes further (as does Boserup) that at the bottom of the socioeconomic scale the situation is more or less reversed. Here female progeny enjoy greater probability of survival and reproduction since their

> biological value is reinforced by the provision of economic roles for women which are equally or more rewarding than those for men (hence matrifocal families). Here brideprice prevails: males compete directly for the purchase of females. Where intense polygyny and female infanticide at the top create severe shortages of females at the bottom, institutionalized systems of sale and capture of women occur (Dikeman 1979:324).

Finally she acknowledges the determining role of specific circumstances:

> Thus, while all human societies are hierarchical systems involving male dominance the extreme

> intensity of competition achieved in class-caste societies . . . must be a function of very particular combinations of economic stress, technological capacity, and political history (Dikeman 1979:326).

As should be clear from preceding sections of this paper such a combination of circumstances was not present in Southeast Asia to the extent that it was in India and China. On the other hand, certain features of the marriage pattern, that is polygyny and hypergamy, were widespread in stratified Southeast Asian societies. The early 16th century observation by Tomé Pires that among Javanese women of good birth "many die virgins in their houses when they cannot gratify themselves by marrying great people" strongly suggests the practice of hypergamy among the nobility at this time. And other more recent accounts firmly establish its basic importance among the royal and elite sectors of Southeast Asian societies as a practice that was generally associated as well with polygyny and intense political rivalry. Leach's (1954) account of highland Burma thus makes much of the fact that while the hill tribes of the region are hypogamous and thus rank wife givers above wife receivers, the nobility and royalty of the Shan kingdoms are hypergamous and thus rank wife takers over wife givers. This of course bears some resemblance to the class-linked pattern of competition for husbands among elites and competition for wives among commoners in India and China that was mentioned above. Marriage patterns among the Balinese, a patrilineal (and somewhat unique) Indonesian society--as analyzed in some detail by Hildred and Clifford Geertz provide a useful example.

Balinese society is ascriptively stratified into noble and commoner sectors, each of which is internally ranked and in some villages, organized into highly competitive lineage groups. Marriage among both commoners and nobles varies from completely endogamous and often arranged unions between patrilineal parallel cousins (children of brothers) to exogamous ones in which the spouses are unrelated. Marriage in both classes also involves the principal of hypergamy and a strong concern with the statuses of the kin groups involved.

Among commoners, marriages between competing kin groups are occasions for conflict and involve real or--as a means of saving face and denying an inferior wife-giving status, by the bride's group--alleged wife capture. This could be interpreted as indicating a pattern of competition among commoner men for wives. However, bride price is not really present except in the form of labor which the groom may occasionally perform for the bride's family, and the basis of competition according to the analysis of Geertz and Geertz is not so much women per se but the status implications of the marriage (1975).

At the same time other elements in the pattern as Dikeman describes it for India, China and elsewhere are missing. Though not common as it is and was in many Southeast Asian societies, divorce is permitted. Though the domestic structural arrangements of Balinese society --virilocal residence and "patrifilial" kin group organization are male centered--in marrying women are not subordinated as they are often reported to be in India and China. Women are thus not "second class members but have full rights and responsibilities." Further, the relationship between husband and wife is one of equality. And there is

> no sharp conceptual opposition between masculinity and femininity, and the division of social roles or spheres of activity according to sex is blurred and weak. Men do most of the skilled and heavy agricultural tasks, but women are necessary for all of the rituals in the rice fields at each stage of the crop, and women can do minor farm labor, and can also own land in their own name and supervise men's work on it. . . . In the dance and drama, men can play female roles or women male roles with no sense of impropriety or oddness (Geertz and Geertz 1975:56).

No mention is made either by Geertz and Geertz or by the sources contained in the HRAF of infanticide in Bali, except by Belo in regard to the birth of twins among commoners (Belo states that she had never heard of it except in one case involving triplets). Thus

while some of the structural conditions associated with female infanticide elsewhere--polygyny, hypergamy, and competition for husbands among the nobility and possibly, for wives among commoners--appear to have been present in traditional Balinese society, the practice itself evidently was not. Presumably what was lacking was the threat of real social and economic deprivation. Dowry seems to have been an option, and the traditional economy seems to have been more one of abundance than scarcity. As is true of Southeast Asia in general little seems to be known of the demographic history of Bali beyond the fact that fertile volcanic soils and ingeniously complex intensive agriculture permitted the existence of large populations. Geertz and Geertz suggest that famines and crop failures have been rare so that only warfare and disease prevented overcrowding (1975:8).

This apparently was the case in Southeast Asia generally, except that for the most part population densities were considerably lighter than they were in traditional Bali and Java. For the most part, information of infanticide ranges from meager to non-existent. For those Southeast Asian societies on which information exists in the Human Relations Area Files it consists mainly of statements as to its absence or rarity. Such information, or its absence, is certainly not above suspicion as reflecting bias or ignorance, but emphatic statements at least can probably be taken to indicate that inquiries were made. Of the handful of HRAF cases only the Miao--a tribal people of South China and the northern cultural fringe of Southeast Asia--are reported to have commonly and openly practiced infanticide. However, neither in the case of the Miao nor the above mentioned Iban is the practice reported to have been biased against females. Since infanticide is reported for those two groups there is little reason to believe that it was not practiced by other, particularly similar, surrounding groups. Conversely, some significance should probably be attached to the fact that among a number of other peoples it is reported that infanticide is a deviant and rare act, and that such peoples include some of the larger, more fully stratified Southeast Asian societies--

the Thai, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian. Among the Thai, for example, infanticide is reported to be "unthinkable," among the Cambodians "unknown," in the case of the Laotians "scarcely any cases are known," while among the Vietnamese (who were strongly influenced by the Chinese among whom infanticide was a common practice) it was "exceedingly rare" or "scarcely known." Finally, among Malays there was a widespread practice which was somewhat opposite to female infanticide, that of the adoption of female infants unwanted by overseas Chinese families. Given the evidence which exists, it seems fair to conclude that infanticide was not, comparatively speaking, a widespread practice in Southeast Asia, and that where it did exist it was not directed primarily against females.

Conclusion

While the domestic status of the sexes in various Southeast Asian societies is by no means uniform, relative sexual equality is a commonly reported feature of many well studied groups. Indeed it would appear difficult to find another comparable region of the world, and certainly of Asia, in which this is true to a greater extent. It has been argued on the basis of a worldwide sample of societies that it is not possible to define sexual status with regard to a single set of features which will vary together in different types of societies (Whyte 1978). Perhaps an important implication of this is that further progress in understanding the domestic sexual pattern in comparative terms will be best achieved not through world-wide cross-cultural studies utilizing relatively small samples, which cannot be adequately stratified, but through comparisons made within and between more limited regions of the world. Goody's efforts with regard to Africa comprise one such example. I suggested at the outset that Southeast Asia differs from other regions and hope to have shown in the course of the paper that this is indeed the case.

The hypotheses which have proved to be the most interesting in regard to the Southeast Asian evidence are those which have been formulated or examined with regard to other regions of the Old World, that is

Africa and Eurasia. Explanations of domestic sexual status often seek to explain the general pattern by reference to one of two of its main elements. Such explanations however are not always comparable since they do not deal with the same geographical or typographical range of societies. Neither are such explanations necessarily mutually exclusive even when they are otherwise comparable. There is no logical reason why a mode of production, a system of social stratification, a type of warfare cannot all contribute to the development of a pattern of sexual status.

Of the various particular arguments which have been dealt with only the notion that warlike tendencies in "village level" societies are closely linked to strong male supremacy and female infanticide is clearly at odds with the Southeast Asian evidence. Most of the other lines of argument are either inapplicable or are to varying extents compatable and suggest plausible interpretations which contribute to a fuller understanding of Southeast Asian society and culture in general terms. On the other hand, the Southeast Asian evidence also indicates that the establishment of a clear pattern of unilinear causality within any relevant set of variables is difficult. Where sexual status and male and female farming or intensive and extensive farming are concerned it seems evident that influence operates in both directions; that once a pattern of sexual status or of appropriate male and female roles has been established in a society this itself will be an important determinant of the ways in which it utilizes a mode of production. Thus the commonly equal participation of men and women in advanced (plough or irrigation) agriculture in Southeast Asia is almost certainly linked to such common participation in the more primitive or extensive forms of cultivation which preceded the more complex ones, recently in many areas. A similar point can be made with regard tc the relationship between domestic sexual status (or domestic social organization generally) and the development of higher forms of political organization and social stratification. Evidence from other areas such as China and India suggests that under some conditions such

political factors do play an important role. But in Southeast Asia the elaboration of status distinctions or levels of political organization are poor predictors of social positions of men and women. Again, it seems reasonable to conclude that influence has operated in both directions; that is, that preexisting patterns of sexual status, as manifest in family organization and kinship, affected the subsequent--and again often fairly recent--emergence of more complex forms of social stratification and more inclusive forms of social and political organization.

Finally, the foregoing remarks suggest that a fuller understanding of the development of the position of men and women in Southeast Asian societies requires a historical or longitudinal perspective as well as a cross-cultural or synchronic one. The former should be taken to include the use of not only the conventional sources of the historian but also, for example, archaeological evidence concerning sexual differences in burial practices and linguistic evidence concerning sexual distinctions in kin terms in different Southeast Asian language groups. The assembly and consideration of such material as may already exist has been beyond the scope of the present paper but it would be a rewarding line of analysis.

Appendix

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Penny Van Esterik

In a topic as analytically complex as women's status, in an area as culturally complex as Southeast Asia, it is inevitable that more questions are raised than answered. The questions listed below are meant to provide some directions for future research. They include both issues raised by the previous papers and topics which are clearly important but which were not introduced earlier. Needless to say, the list is far from exhaustive.

Among the many special groups of Southeast Asian women that deserve more focused attention, I want to identify one group in particular. There are at present over 100,000 refugee women in camps and holding centers throughout Southeast Asia. Of the half million Lao, Hmong, Khmer, and Vietnamese refugees that have been admitted to the United States since 1975, nearly half are women. As mothers, wives, and female heads of households, they bear an important responsibility for their families' adjustment in the United States. It is my hope that those who have a scholarly interest in women in Southeast Asia will extend their research interests to include these women so recently uprooted from their homes. For that reason, I have included reference to two works on refugee women in the following bibliography (Equity Policy Center 1980, Palmer 1981) and begin with two questions regarding women refugees from Southeast Asia.

1. How has the refugee experience affected the division of labor and sexual status of Lao, Hmong, Khmer, and Vietnamese women residing in the United States?

2. How do the adaptive strategies of male and female refugees from Southeast Asia compare as they compete for scarce economic resources in American communities?

3. In Southeast Asia, is there any tradition of women's cults, or do women generally support the dominant religious tradition?

4. What is the effect of Islam on women's personal identities? What role models does Islam provide for women?

5. What cultural institutions in Southeast Asia provide women's sanctuaries? How does women's behavior change in all female groups?

6. How are ideologies such as male dominance perpetuated in different Southeast Asian societies?

7. What is the role of women's voluntary associations in advancing the rights and interests of Southeast Asian women?

8. How are marriage reform laws being enforced? What are the social ramifications of the reforms?

9. How can research on family planning be better integrated with broader research on women, sex roles, and social organization?

10. How does the status of women of Chinese ancestry differ from the status of women among the ethnic majority in Southeast Asian cities?

11. How does the pattern of female migration into urban centers differ from the pattern of male migrant labor?

12. How do women agricultural workers respond to new agricultural technology?

13. What constraints and opportunities are presented by the market for female domestic labor in Southeast Asian cities?

14. What are the principle distinctions between rural and urban women's participation in the informal labor market?

15. Compare the resources available to the poorest groups in urban and rural communities. What are the most important differences between urban and rural poverty for Southeast Asian women?

16. How can we better assess the impact of the informal political roles of women in Southeast Asia?

17. What are the effects of women holding political office?

18. How has socialism in Southeast Asian societies affected the lives of women? Is there a socialist feminist movement, for example?

19. What factors are most likely to influence the status of women in different Southeast Asian countries?

20. Are Western social science models useful for studying the status of women in Southeast Asia? If not, how should they be modified?

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